

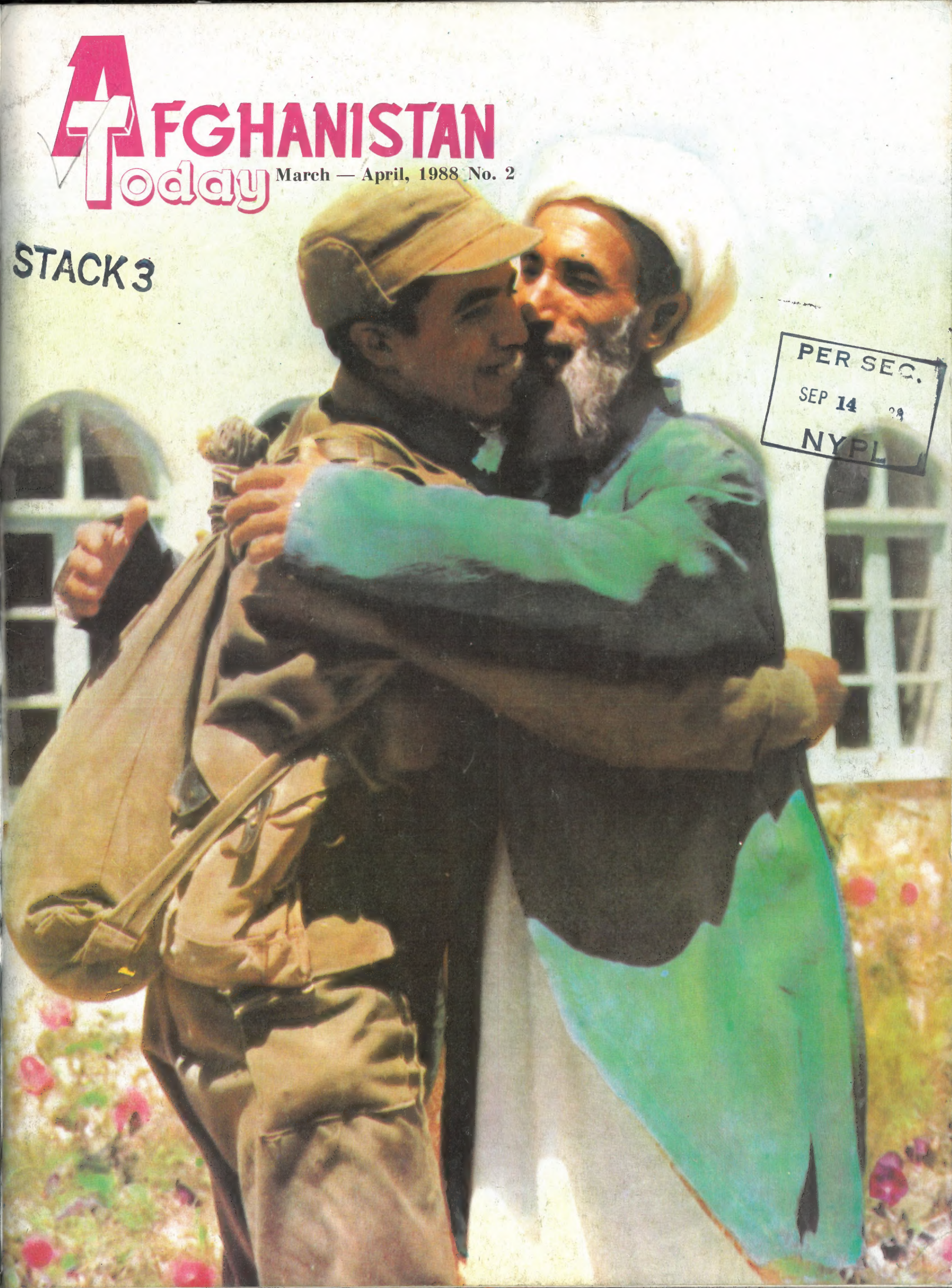
AFGHANISTAN

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March — April, 1988 No. 2

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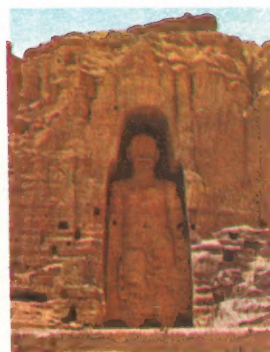
The April Revolution has paved the way for Afghan women to participate equally with men in social life and building a new Afghanistan. Now Afghan women acquire the same professions as men, which previously were exclusively the domain of the latter like political sciences and law. Shoulder-to-shoulder with men they defend their country from the enemy. In the photo: A student of the Faculty of Political Sciences of Kabul University

BI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE OF THE PEACE. SOLIDARITY
AND FRIENDSHIP ORGANIZATION
OF THE REPUBLIC OF AFGHANISTAN

Published in English under the supervision of the Editorial Board



Back to peaceful life



One of world famous
Bamyan Buddhas (the
Great Buddha) hewn
from the cliff by
Buddhist monks (the
Kushan period)

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For subscription apply to:
Afghanistan Today,
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Kabul, Afghanistan
Phone: 61868, 62022

Our account No 5831/9
Da Afghanistan Bank,
Kabul, Afghanistan

Price: Home — 50 Afs a copy
250 Afs yearly
Abroad — 2 US dollars a copy
10 US dollars yearly

Signed for printing 09.03.88

EDITORIAL

APRIL REVOLUTION:

Manifestation of People's Will, Historic Realities

There are times in the life of every country which become turning points in the national history.

Such a day in the contemporary history of Afghanistan was April 27, 1978—when the might and will of the Afghan people emerged victorious in their revolutionary uprising.

History and the very process of development of various European, Asian, American and African countries have proved the inevitable collapse of pre-feudal, semi-feudal and feudal systems. Thus, the accomplishment of an anti-feudal revolution in Afghan society in the last quarter of the 20th century was historically inevitable because, the slow and painful decay of the traditional feudal system had begun in Afghan society a century ago.

Sayed Jamaluddin Afghani was the first to set forth a programme for social reform in Afghan society. His reforms were, to some extent, carried out by Amir Sher Ali Khan.

However, the first organized movement known as the Constitutionalist Movement, came into being in the early 20th century, aimed at social transformation and modernizing Afghan society.

Constitutionalism was the first movement to set as its priority aim the spread of education and development of popular culture, science and industry, democracy and legality and other manifestations of new civilization. Above all, it desired the restoration of the complete independence of Afghanistan, doing away with British domination over the country's foreign policy, as well as establishing relations of Afghanistan with other countries. However, the movement was cruelly suppressed by the ruling regime.

For successive decades, internal reaction, colonialism and neo-colonialism subjected to brutal reprisals every progressive-minded element of Afghan society. Yet they could not eliminate the lofty objectives and aspirations and could not silence the call for freedom, progress, justice and democracy, the call of history's conscience, real humanity and kill the national valour and dignity of Afghans. The second constitutionalist movement, known as the *Young Afghans Movement*, emerged in the political arena in the first decade of this century more powerful and more decisive, and stood at the head of the national liberation movement of the Afghan people and led them to the high peaks of victory over British colonialism.

In 1919, Afghanistan attained complete independence as a result of the Third Anglo-Afghan War (May — August, 1919).

Shah (King) Amanullah who had close relations with the Young Afghans Movement came to power with the help of members of the movement. Simultaneously with the declaration of independence, the new king proclaimed freedom for the last slaves and introduced new reforms for modernizing Afghan society and eradication of the severe backwardness imposed on it by Britain. Establishment of schools, hospitals, factories, agricultural and transport enterprises and other public utility institutions and amenities began.

King Amanullah advocated emancipation of women and the first girls' schools were established. The first Constitution of Afghanistan was endorsed in this period.

Political rights and freedoms were declared for the citizens and any manifestation of despotism and tyranny were described as actions running counter to law.

However the mistakes and shortcomings of that period were taken advantage of by the forces of internal reaction and imperialism which, stirring up a rebellion, overthrew Amanullah's government (1929).

Great historian and scholar Alama Abdul Hai Habibi has described the overthrow of Amanullah and the suppression of the Amani movement as a catastrophe for Afghan society, which threw Afghanistan back for half a century.

Fifty years after this event, Afghanistan, which had been the first among Asian and African countries to break the colonial chains, was among the most backward countries which had newly attained their independence.

On the threshold of the April Revolution, the annual per capita income in Afghanistan was just 140 dollars, the majority of the residents, including 66—88 per cent of the children, were affected by malnutrition; there were only 0.63 physicians and 1.8 hospital beds for every 10,000 citizens, average life expectancy was 42 and as regards child mortality Afghanistan was among the most backward countries; 92 per cent of males and 95 per cent of females were illiterate, over 1.5 million of the population were leading a primitive nomadic way of life, thousands of men were leaving the country searching for employment.

Thus the April Revolution became the continuation of the historic struggle of the Afghan people for independence, democracy, and social progress which triumphed under the leadership of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan that has become heir of the Afghan fighters and political vanguard in the political struggle of the people.

The April Revolution is a national-democratic, anti-feudal and anti-imperialist revolution.

It is a democratic revolution for it gained support of the broadest strata of Afghan society and was instrumental in solving vital issues as just distribution of land and water, keeping in mind historical traditions, growth of national economy, improvement of the living conditions of the people, democratization of socio-political life and raising popular power.

It is a national revolution, for it is determined by common history of all nationalities of the country, their deep religious sentiments and traditions. As such, the revolution is to solve the grave issues of national progress, co-ordinating social changes with the religious beliefs and sentiments of the people, ensure equality of rights of nationalities and tribes of the country and create conditions for their further closeness based on socio-economic, political and cultural progress and their active participation in construction of the new and advanced Afghanistan.

It is an anti-feudal revolution, for it has to deal with a wide scope of problems inherited from an extremely backward society.

It is an anti-imperialist revolution, for it was the continuation of the long struggle of the people of Afghanistan against colonialism and neocolonialism, for national independence and sovereignty. Imperialism is the one

and only enemy of all class and social forces in Afghanistan, that seeks to stifle the country's urge for social progress, to perpetuate the domination of foreign monopolies, and to implant its own culture to the detriment of the development of the traditional national culture of the Afghan people.

The experience of the first decade after the revolution has enriched the understanding of the nature of the national-democratic April Revolution and the implementation of its objectives in Afghan society. This wealth can explicitly be seen in the documents of the plenums of the PDPA CC, particularly in the documents of the Second National PDPA Conference, in which the revolutionary process has critically and comprehensively been analysed and assessed. Explicit criticism and bold evaluations reflected in these documents show that the revolution can govern itself.

Despite the numerous difficulties, particularly the continuation of the nine-year undeclared imperialist war and the US three-billion-dollar assistance for keeping up the flames of the war which has severely damaged Afghan society, the April Revolution has notched up great achievements and fully proved its progressive nature.

— To settle social and national issues, the April Revolution has directly attracted and activated the broadest part of society. Though a considerable number of forces having practically common interest with the revolution are still siding with the counter-revolution due to the complexity of the process of the revolution, undoubtedly they will soon join the process of the revolution. Realizing the facts they will make their contribution to constructive activities for building a prosperous Afghanistan.

— The post-revolution years are the years of the growth of literacy and culture. Over 1.8 million individuals have become literate during the same period. 25,000 literacy courses are active in the country. A large number of children and youth are admitted to schools and higher educational institutions. At present, the number of graduates of medical institutions per year is higher than the medical students trained for two decades in the past. Totally the average of the youth who graduate from higher educational institutions every year is three times more than before the revolution.

— In the field of culture, suffice it to say that the number of books published during the last five years is 36 times more than that put out during five years before the revolution. The circulation of dailies has grown 13 times, compared to the past. Before the revolution, TV programmes were transmitted only in Kabul while now varieties of programmes are broadcast by local TV stations in many provinces.

— In the field of economy, despite all difficulties and damages inflicted by the undeclared war, forty thousand new jobs have been created after the revolution. Dozens of factories, productive and service institutions have newly been set up within this period.

— Women have obtained numerous rights. The number of women working in productive institutions has become 50 times more than prior to the revolution. The number of boy and girl students is equal in educational institutions. Women are working in high state organs. The role of women in society is rapidly growing.

— The people of Afghanistan for the first time enjoy a popular and democratic constitution which fully conforms with the principles and values of the Declaration of Human Rights, international conventions and historical traditions of Afghan society.

Likewise, tens of other laws and decrees laid the legislative foundations of contemporary life of the people of Afghanistan. The law on political parties which brings about conditions for open activity of political parties and organizations was for the first time endorsed. Based on this law, apart from the PDPA, the Revolutionary Organization of Toilers of Afghanistan, the Organization

of Toilers of Afghanistan, the Islamic Party of the People of Afghanistan and the Justice Party of Peasants have officially been registered.

The revolution has never linked its life and implementation of its objectives with war. As undeniable facts show, it is imperialism and reaction who have unleashed the undeclared war against the people of Afghanistan. To stop war and bloodshed, the leadership of the Republic of Afghanistan proclaimed the policy of national reconciliation and adopted concrete measures for its implementation. The policy of national reconciliation has inseparable links with the lofty and humanitarian objectives of the April Revolution aiming at ensuring peace and prosperity for the people of Afghanistan.

War not only does not solve the problems but also endangers the existence of humanity. Struggle for peace, i. e., creation of favourable conditions for security and tranquillity of the people is in the focus of attention of the leadership of the Republic of Afghanistan.

With the victory of the April revolution heavy blows were dealt to the infrastructures of the semi-feudal regime in Afghanistan. The ten years of the revolution scattered the feudal system to an extent that cannot be rehabilitated any more. During these years, a new political system came into being, which provided all facilities for the development of the society.

Thus, the policy of national reconciliation is by no means a retreat to the past, the past which the people of Afghanistan have already bid farewell to and emancipated themselves from its slavery.

National reconciliation means endeavour for reaching a national accord and solving burning issues through peaceful means taking into account the interests of all social and political forces.

National reconciliation means rejection of war and attraction of dynamic forces towards work and constructiveness in favour of progress of our united, free and non-aligned homeland. It means going peacefully towards better future.

Briefly the policy of national reconciliation is:

- comprehensive and realistic evaluation of the situation of the country and around it;

- settlement of issues pertaining to the present and future, giving preference to national and common interest over class, party, ideologic, tribal and other issues concerned;

- efforts for solution of accumulated issues through political means taking into view history, traditions, national culture, beliefs and religious sentiments;

- rejection of war and honest observing the cease-fire till reaching a national accord and complete cessation of war;

- participation in peaceful dialogues seeking ways for national accord, giving up the monopoly of political power and just participation of all forces of society in state power and social administration;

- rendering assistance to repatriates;

- defending the peaceful life of the people of Afghanistan.

As the first step towards peace the people's power proclaimed the unilateral cease-fire and has extended its term three times.

In response to this invitation, during the one year after the proclamation of the policy of national accord, over 40,000 armed oppositionists, giving up the senseless fratricidal war have come over to the side of the people's power. More than 110,000 repatriates have come back home from Iran and Pakistan. Over 3,200 villages have peacefully come under State control. These facts and figures are increasing with every passing day. It is obvious that life should overcome death, constructiveness and creativity should tackle destructiveness and peace should overcome war.

(Continued on p. 19)

Historic Loya Jirgah

The year 1987, the tenth year of the April Revolution, was characterized by a number of important steps taken by the people's power, among which one can name the proclamation of the policy of national reconciliation. Within the framework of this policy, aimed at its soonest achievement, the Loya Jirgah (Great Assembly) of the people of Afghanistan was held.

The Loya Jirgah of 1987, convened at a crucial moment of the country's destiny, discussed issues of historic importance. The Jirgah approved the new Constitution named by the people the Constitution of Peace and Democracy, discussed and solved the issue of the name of the country and elected, according to the Constitution, the first president Najibullah. The President declared in his inaugural speech new plans and proposals pertaining to the normalization of the situation inside the country, cessation of the war and bloodshed, and achieving the settlement of the situation around Afghanistan. He pledged to do his best to put these aims into practice.

The Jirgah was attended by 1,500 delegates, the worthiest representatives of the people. Moreover, all Afghan political parties and organizations, including those which are stationed outside the country as well as those armed groups who are now at war against the state power, had been invited to participate in the Loya Jirgah.

As many as 340 delegates presented their views, proposals, plans and points of criticism during the debates at the Jirgah.

The Jirgah discussed, one by one, each article of the draft constitution, which was then approved, keeping in mind the views set forth. Though some of the articles were discussed actively and changed, all the chapters and the constitution as a whole were endorsed by the Jirgah with an overwhelming majority.

According to the Constitution approved, the Jirgah took up the issue of election of President. The single candidate was proposed by the National Front of Afghanistan. The nominee won the support of all representatives of the organizations and other delegates from different parts of the country. Esteemed Najibullah was unanimously elected President of the Republic of Afghanistan.

It may seem difficult to understand the fact how the Jirgah decided unanimously on such important issue despite the existing differences and complicated situation in the country and the existence of a wide spectrum of political forces. However, one must take into consideration the essence of Loya Jirgahs in Afghanistan, bitter experience of the nine years of war, historic transformations of the last decade and, above all, the policy of national reconciliation which has been proclaimed on the initiative of the PDPA with the aim of cessation of the war and bloodshed and establishment of peace in the country.

It is over one year that broad national dialogue has been under way in Afghanistan, the national reconciliation policy being its focal point. The Constitution which had been worked out and approved within 20 months, was under public debate for four months. Over two million countrymen directly took part in the debate and

15,000 views, proposals and points of criticism for finalizing the draft were received by the Constitution Drafting Commission. As a result of public debate, fundamental changes and amendments were introduced into the draft which enable us to say that the constitution was a direct outcome of collective thinking of the people of Afghanistan and constitutes the basis of national accord.

Keeping in mind this process, it is easy to perceive the atmosphere of the Loya Jirgah and adoption of unanimous decisions.

The people consider the Loya Jirgah of November 1987 a historic turning point in settlement of the present issues and complete realization of the aspirations for which they have struggled for a century.

The role and significance of this great event can be properly understood only when the present situation and issues as well as the entire current process are thoroughly studied together with their historic past and roots.

However, it seems rather complicated to answer the question why Afghanistan did not manage, even after its independence during the past six decades, despite having enough manpower and natural resources, to overcome backwardness and to embark upon the path of progress. Outstanding in this respect are some negative phenomena manifested in neo-colonial policy of western countries against Afghanistan, lack of political democracy, incapability of ruling regimes in tackling the main issues on ensuring the national progress, stubborn resistance of conservative forces against any measures for modernizing the country, and finally the mistakes of reformist forces whose activities were mostly characterized by immaturity and haste.

Hence it will become clear that most of the issues, as a complicated whole, had emerged as long ago as in the beginning of the century and remained not only unsolved, but have become still more complicated and are the main source of today's hardships.

Undoubtedly, the recent decade has been the decade of the deepest and broadest radical transformation and unprecedented efforts aimed at solving the existing complex of problems and ensuring the national progress to the benefit of the people of Afghanistan. However, the process of implementation of the transformations has been accompanied by some negative phenomena, both objective and subjective, for which one should feel sorry, and work more than ever for removing these drawbacks and correcting the direction, forms, and dynamism of the transformations targeted.

More than nine years of the war and bloodshed have turned today into the main obstacle in the way of fulfilling the historical aspirations of the people and brought about numerous painful calamities, the cessation of which has today become the most vital issue for Afghanistan.

The Afghan society manifested its viability and capability of solving these problems in the policy of national reconciliation and the process of its realization.

In the course of the past one year, most aspects of the process have been consolidated with endorsement of separate laws and regulations. But the progress of na

tional reconciliation required a renewal of the foundations of social life. Therefore, endorsement of the Constitution is considered a vital step in restructuring the state system, previously founded on a one-party system, according to political pluralism, bringing it to harmony with the spirit and essence of the national reconciliation policy.

The essence of the process under way is that, taking into consideration the views and interests of the opposition which correspond to common national interests, enables to give up war as a means of solving the differences and, based on these mutual national interests, put an end to the war and freely and openly participate in the life of Afghan society and be equally represented in a coalition administration.

One of the main aspects of drafting and endorsing the Constitution, therefore, was to change radically the composition of State administration, to bring it closer to the consciousness and expectations of the popular masses, taking into consideration their traditions and beliefs.

The Constitution has enshrined all legal, political, civil, socio-economic and cultural rights of the citizens maintained and guaranteed by the State. The Chapter "Rights and Freedoms of the Citizens" is the longest one in the Constitution. The importance of the issue emanates from the fact that real democracy cannot exist in practice without making the people masters of their own destiny. And this cannot be fulfilled unless the people enjoy broad rights and freedoms.

On the other hand, without real democracy it is impossible to attract maximum energy and talent of the people for building a free, developed, democratic and tranquil society.

The Constitution has precisely outlined in separate chapters on the way of election, tasks and authorities of the Loya Jirgah, President, Parliament, the Council of Ministers, Judiciary, Attorney, the Constitutional Council, local bodies of State power as well as the foreign policy of the Republic of Afghanistan.

The Loya Jirgah discussed the question of the name of the State on which numerous proposals had been set forth in the course of public debate, and named the country the Republic of Afghanistan.

Accordingly, November 30 will be marked every year as a national festival in the country as the Constitution Day. The President noted in this regard, "From this very day national reconciliation, acquiring a lawful strong base, enters a new phase of practical creativity and dynamism." The President also pointed out, that "Afghanistan has, for the first time in the history of its existence, gained a popular Constitution in the completest sense."

The process of drafting, ascertaining public opinion and endorsing the Constitution determines its popular character.

The Constitution is popular because every article in it is in conformity with the principles of the sacred religion of Islam, the time-honoured traditions of Afghan society, the needs, demands, expectations of the people, it maintains and guarantees the interests of the people.

The popular character of the Constitution is based on the fundamental principles of national reconciliation like a multi-party system, coalition administration of the State and society as well as the fact that all Afghans enjoy equal rights and freedoms without any discrimination, irrespective of their political and religious beliefs, and that they can equally and actively participate in establishing national peace, in other spheres of social life and administration of the country.

In this first speech President Najibullah said, "As President I consider it my priority duty to do my best to help implementation of the Constitution and endeavour so that the values enshrined in it can be at the service of



People's President

Short biography of Najibullah, President of the Republic of Afghanistan

Najibullah was born in 1947 in a state official's family. He is Pashtun by nationality. He graduated in 1964 from Habibia Lycee and completed his higher education in the Medical Faculty of Kabul University in 1975.

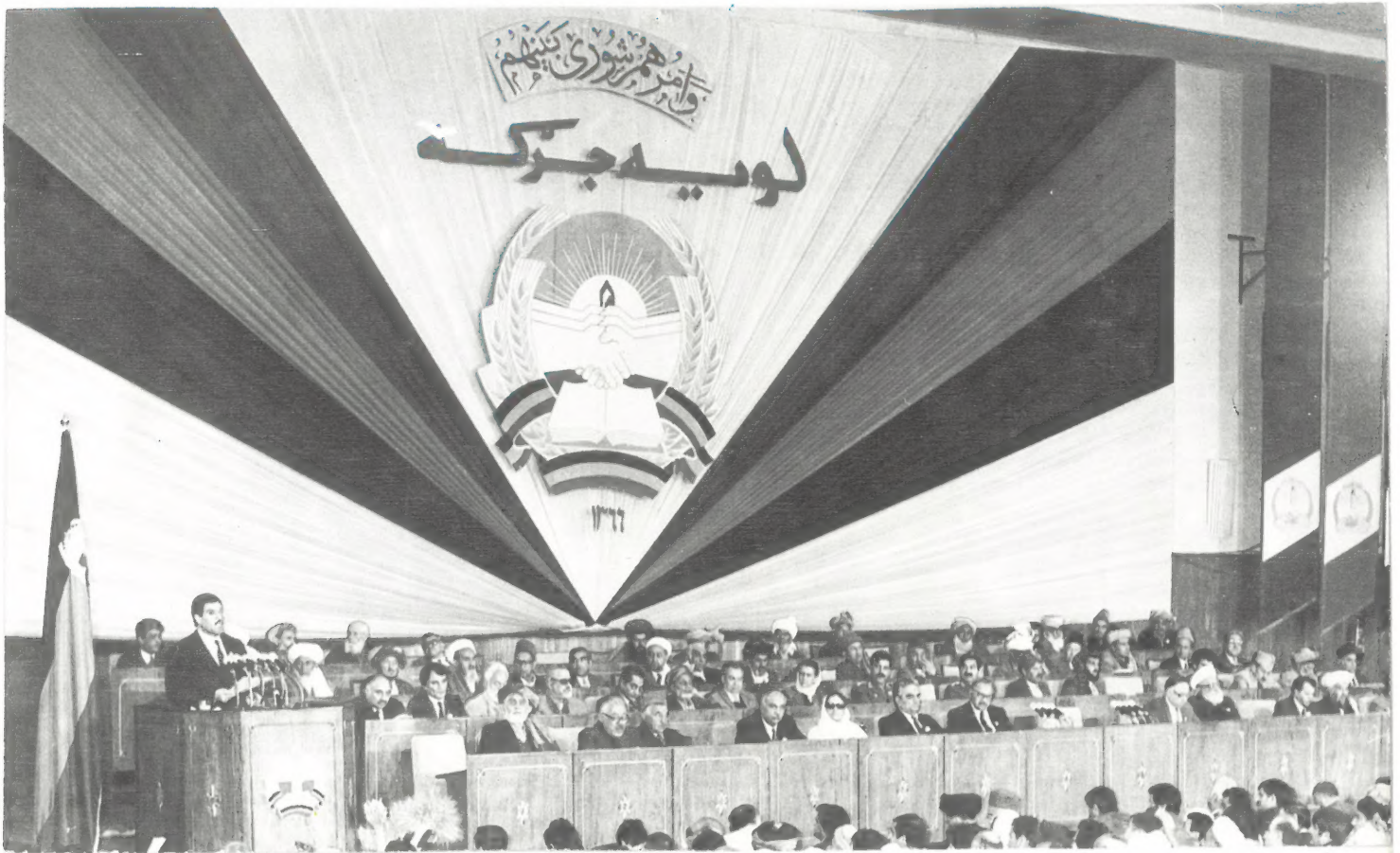
Najibullah became a member of the PDPA in 1965; he was twice imprisoned for his active participation in the revolutionary struggle against the feudal and bureaucratic regime.

After the victory of the April Revolution he became a member of the Revolutionary Council of the DRA. He has, since the very first days of the victory of the revolution, played a meritorious role in strengthening the people's power and expansion of social foundations of the revolutionary power and socio-economic transformations in the country.

Najibullah was appointed to a diplomatic mission in 1978. Due to his active role in reinforcing the foundations of the revolutionary power, Najibullah, as an active and experienced party activist, was assigned by the Central Committee of the PDPA the post of General President of the State Security Services.

Najibullah has been awarded state orders in recognition of his meritorious services. He is a member of the Central Committee since 1977 and a member of the Politburo of the PDPA since 1981. The 16th Plenum of the PDPA CC elected him in 1985 secretary of the PDPA CC and the 18th Plenum of the PDPA CC elected him general secretary of the PDPA CC. As a general secretary of the party he has played an outstanding role and acted with resolution and competence in formulating and implementing the national reconciliation policy.

Najibullah was elected on October 1, 1987 President of the Revolutionary Council. The Loya Jirgah of Afghanistan elected Najibullah at its session on November 30, 1987 President of the Republic of Afghanistan.



Presidium of
the Jirgah



The very spirit of Loya Jirgah implies frank and straight-forward expressing viewpoints and opinions. One of the delegates speaking on the amendments to the Constitution

the people and help in improving their living standards, ensuring peace and progress."

Keeping in mind the heavy duties and responsibilities that the Constitution had entrusted to President, his activity gains more importance in restructuring the political system based on terms of a coalition administration, implementation of the Constitution, ensuring national reconciliation and mobilization of the social forces in achieving these objectives.

The President in his first speech said before the delegates to the Loya Jirgah, "I see the most important duty of the President in relying on people, defending their interests and directing them along the road illuminated by the star of national peace and prosperity of the people."

As far as the peace-loving people of Afghanistan know Najibullah as the initiator of the national reconciliation policy and hail his strenuous efforts in this direction, since he was the head of the Constitution Drafting Commission and his competence was known for all in his long political struggles, discharging diplomatic tasks and serving in other high State posts, they look with great optimism at their elected President and pin great hopes on him and his activities.

The convocation of the Loya Jirgah, endorsement of the Constitution and election of the first popular President of Afghanistan are practical steps of particular in-

ternational importance in the realization of national reconciliation, its momentum and acceleration.

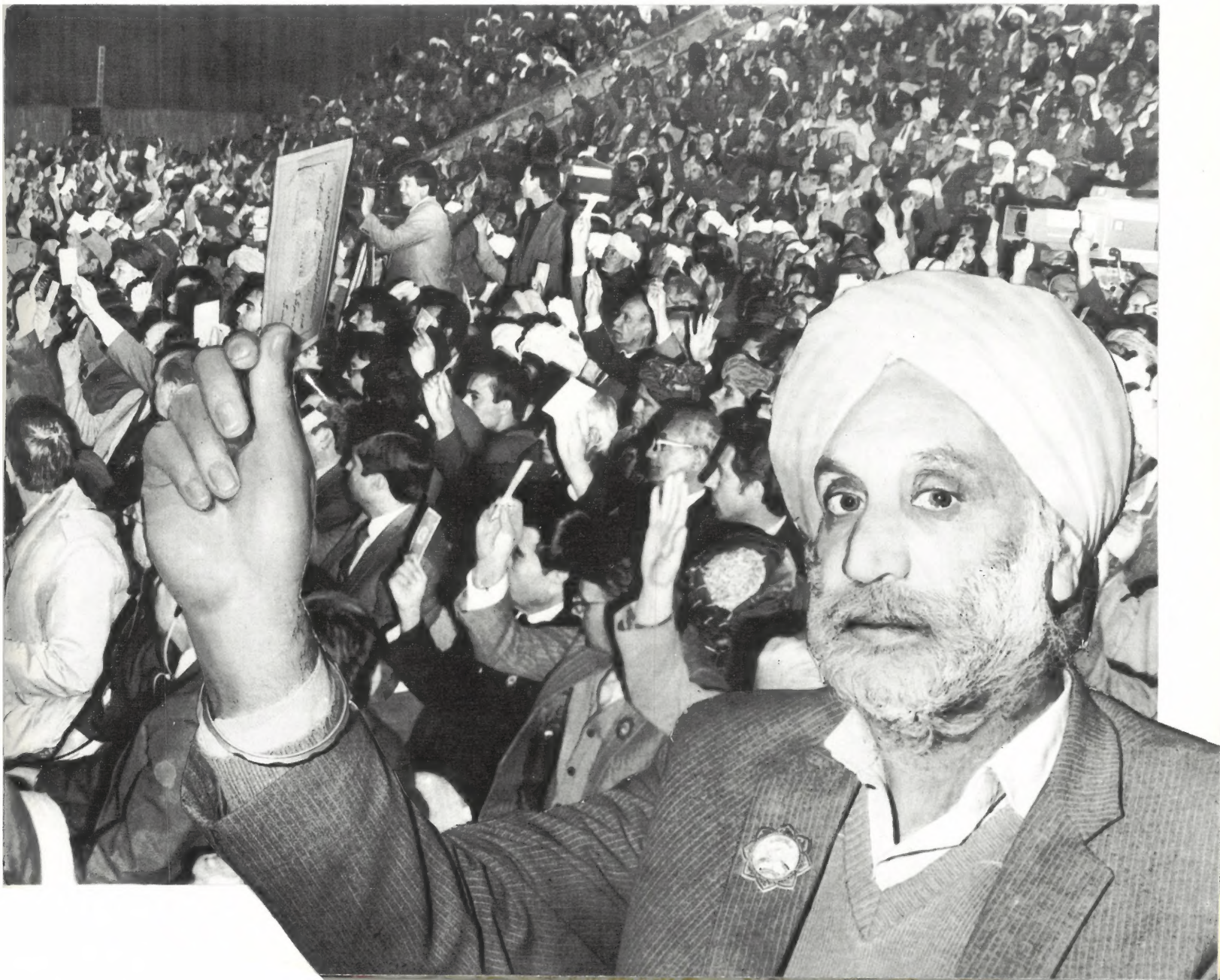
Considering the importance of normalization of the situation around Afghanistan and preservation of the existence of Afghanistan as an independent, sovereign and non-aligned country with territorial integrity, this issue assumes special importance.

The new Constitution of the Republic of Afghanistan has embodied the international aspects of national reconciliation policy as well. Article Three of the Constitution says, "The Republic of Afghanistan is a non-aligned country which does not join any military bloc and does not allow establishment of foreign military bases on its territory."

Chapter Twelve of the Constitution, devoted to the foreign policy, has clearly formulated the principles and peace objectives of the foreign policy of Afghanistan in conformity with the humanitarian and democratic essence of the entire Constitution. These objectives and principles are in full conformity with the UN Charter, principles and objectives of the Non-Aligned Movement and the today's general inclination of the entire humanity to peaceful co-existence, complete safety of nuclear weapons, rebuttal of war, inequality, saber-rattling and seeking supremacy over the nations.

Unanimous
voting for
peace

By H. Khorasani



Mirwais Khan Hotak. Since the Loya Jirgah of 1709 where he was elected King of Afghanistan, the tradition of Jirgahs has been revived

Democratic Tradition of the Past

One of the time-honoured traditions of the people of Afghanistan, inherited from their fathers and forefathers and deeply-rooted in history, is the tradition of holding *Jirgahs* (Assemblies). It is historically true that the people of Afghanistan adopted important decisions after collective consultation. But when it was necessary to take a decision on which the country's destiny depended, then Afghan leaders convened *Loya Jirgahs* (Grand Assemblies) which were authorized to adopt decisions vital to the country's destiny, and after the decision was adopted the one who refused to fulfil or follow it was considered a traitor to the homeland.

Ancient chronicles tell us that even thousands of years before Christ the ancestors of Afghans had assemblies called *Sabha* (representatives) and *Samithi* (senate). It is also recorded that during the reign of Kanishka the Great (1st century A. D.) a grand religious jirgah was held. However, from then onward the jirgah tradition was gradually on the decline.

But from the beginning of the 18th century, i.e., after the convocation of the Kandahar Loya Jirgah (1709, as a result of which the Hotaki dynasty emerged) the tradition of Loya Jirgahs was revived.

Besides, national, local, tribal and ethnic jirgahs have been common among Afghans. They are considered the main forum for discussing problems and exerting joint efforts by the people toward their solution. And these jirgahs have given a new direction to the social life of Afghan land.

There exist other forms of gatherings, called "Jirgahs" and consultative gatherings which people call "Marika". Issues tabled in these gatherings are less important as compared to those in the national jirgahs.



The Loya Jirgah of Afghanistan can almost be considered equivalent to the assembly of founding fathers in other countries, but with a difference that the Loya Jirgahs are not called in Afghanistan only for promulgating and endorsing a constitution, but also as the highest gathering for conducting discussion on vital and significant national issues at particularly hard moments of crisis and danger. The Loya Jirgahs can discuss nationally vital issues, general guidelines, domestic and foreign policies of the State and elect leadership of the country.

The Afghan culture, having reached its peak in the 15th century, gradually began to stagnate from the beginning of the 16th century onwards. The country was dismembered for a long time by neighbouring state, which had newly gained power. Thus, it lost its independence, national sovereignty and territorial integrity. During this period, the soil of Afghanistan was changed into battlefields for neighbouring countries, the war resulting in nothing but destruction and calamity.

At the end of the 17th century, crisis, exploitation and intolerable tyranny increased dissatisfaction and caused the people to rise against the Safawi dynasty of Iran and its local satraps. Thus, Kandahar, which was one of the important places under Safawi domination, was changed into the centre of liberation activities. This move which, in fact, was considered the continuation of national movements of the 17th century, led by Bayazid Roshan and Khoshhal Khan Khatak, created the basis on which our future was fashioned and shaped.

As a result of this national movement, the Loya Jirgah of 1709 was convened in Kokaran village of Kandahar on the initiative of Mirwais Khan Hotaki. This Loya Jirgah was convened in three sessions with the last one in



Ahmad Shah
Baba's
inauguration
(picture by
Ghausuddin,
Kabul Military
Museum)

Mancha village in which important decisions were taken on the uprising against the troops of the Safawi State, establishment of a free and national government and election of Mirwais Khan as the national leader. According to the Afghan tradition, participants of the Loya Jirgah took an oath before the Holy Quran, swords, bread and salt pledging to implement decisions of the Jirgah.

The decisions of the Jirgah were able to unite the tribal heads of Abdal, Ghaljaie, Tajik, Hazara, Uzbek, and Baluch as well as influential patriotic clergymen, and set up a united national army. As a result, the 1709 national uprising and struggle against the troops of the Safawi State were successfully put into practice, and an independent national government was formed, which existed up to 1738.

After the fall of the Hotaki dynasty, the eyes of Iranian rulers fell upon the Afghan soil again. However, after the assassination of Nadir Afshar in 1747, the rule of his dynasty in Afghanistan also came to an end. The units of Afghanistan army returned to Kandahar. Later Pash-tun, Uzbek, Hazara, Tajik and Baluch tribes convened a national jirgah at Mazar-i-Shar-e-Surkh in October 1747 for determining the future of Afghanistan.

In the sessions, held for eight consecutive days, the participants of the Loya Jirgah failed to elect a national leader by an overwhelming majority, for every one of the tribal chieftains believed that it is he who deserved this honour.

The ninth day's session of the jirgah was to become a historic one. In this session, Sabir Shah Kabuli, Rohani and Arif Namdar, who had earlier been elected as the jury, nominated with foresight and vision Ahmad Khan Abdali as their candidate and laid a bunch of wheat ears

on his head as a crown. The nominee proved to be a born leader. The great services of Ahmad Shah Abdali, who never wore a crown and sat on a plain throne, who preserved close contacts with the people and wisely and justly conducted affairs of the State, ensured national unity and territorial integrity through relying on the people and founded the basis of the central government of Afghanistan, constitute one of the most brilliant pages of Afghan history. As a token of gratitude for his services the Afghans bestowed upon Ahmad Shah the title of "Baba" (grandfather), and he is remembered in history by the name of Ahmad Shah Baba. Thus, the "Mazar-e-Shir-i-Surkh jirgah" was the beginning of a new turning point for the homeland of Afghans.

Numerous tribal, local and national jirgahs were convened in the course of anti-colonial national liberation struggle of the people of Afghanistan. In these jirgahs the people co-ordinated their wisdom, adopted important decisions for defeating the enemy, restoring and safeguarding independence of the country.

In 1841 (during the First Anglo-Afghan war), when the mass uprisings began in different parts of the country, the main obstacle that stood in the way of final triumph was the absence of organization, firm will and united leadership. To solve this problem, Naib Aminullah Logari, along with other leaders of Kabul uprising, organized another jirgah, that worked out a unified plan, specified duties of the leaders of the uprising and elected council of 12 members to take over command of the uprising. This jirgah was of historic significance, because, as a result of the victorious uprising of Kabul, armed struggle of the people was put on a course leading to the final victory, and for the first time in history, the British empire, "in whose colonies the sun

Delegates to the Loya Jirgah of 1924 (under King Amanullah), which adopted the first Constitution of Afghanistan



never sets", suffered a crushing defeat. The Kabul uprising resulted in the annihilation of the whole British army in Kabul, and the sole survivor, Dr. Brydon, went half-dead to General Sale on January 13, 1842 to convey the news of the defeat of the British army.

Numerous sessions, local and tribal jirgahs were also held during this national liberation struggle of Afghans against the colonial British forces, the biggest of which was the jirgah of Ghazni held with the participation of 189 representatives of local residents, including Mullah Moshk Alim and General Mohammad Jan Khan, two prominent leaders of the uprising.

During the reign of Amir Sher Ali Khan, who was in favour of modernization of the country, establishment of a central government in his home policy and independence in the country's foreign relations, a Loya Jirgah was called in 1865 for putting an end to civil conflicts and wars, establishing national security and expanding the central power to the entire territory of Afghanistan. For Amir Sher Ali Khan, with his avowed objectives, faced, from the very beginning of his rule, a severe domestic crisis. The country, torn by communal wars and conflicts inspired by nobility, was getting weaker from the beginning of the reign of Mohammad Zaie Dynasty; the working people faced the severe burden of feudal tyranny and despotism.

Over 2,000 representatives of all strata and classes of Afghanistan had participated in the Loya Jirgah of 1865, which supported the policy and efforts of Amir Sher Ali Khan in national interest, and played an important role in realizing its objectives. The jirgah also accepted the proposal of the Amir for appointing a crown-prince of the monarchy.

During the First World War (1914-1918) when the anti-colonial and freedom-loving sentiments of the Afghan people against British colonialists mounted to a crescendo, national leaders intended to adopt wide-ranging measures for restoring the complete independence of Afghanistan. These sentiments were also strengthened in the royal court, the opposition forces against the de-

pendent policy and loyalty of Amir Habibullah to British colonialism.

At that time, delegations of Germany, Austria and Turkey, which had come to Kabul, endeavoured to draw Afghanistan into their military alliance against the United Kingdom by making use of the sentiments and yearnings of Afghans against British colonialism.

Despite all these factors, Amir Habibullah chose to beat about the bush in declaring a sacred war; he endeavoured to prevent the anti-colonial sentiments among the frontier tribes from reaching an explosive point.

For achieving this end, Amir Habibullah called the Loya Jirgah in 1915, and inaugurated it with a speech on the political situation in the world, developments of the First World War and the tasks of the Loya Jirgah.

It was a time when representatives of the people, mainly distinguished clergymen, who had under their influence overwhelming votes and wanted to maintain their control over the sentiments of the people, came out for resolute measures for restoring the independence and territorial integrity of Afghanistan.

Immediately after the assassination of Amir Habibullah Khan, in February 1919, the *Young Afghans Movement*, whose aim was to regain independence, ensure progress and modernize the country, succeeded in bringing Amanullah Khan, who had close links with the movement, to power.

Simultaneously with the proclamation of independence of Afghanistan, Amir (King) Amanullah announced a number of necessary reforms aimed at doing away with atrocities of the absolutist regime, and granting basic freedoms to the people of Afghanistan.

Inspired by such noble intentions, Amir Amanullah convened the Loya Jirgah of 1922 in Jalalabad city. It was attended by 872 representatives of the people, including Shaikhs, Sadats (Arab descendants) and elders of various tribes.

For the first time, a draft constitution of Afghanistan was discussed in this Loya Jirgah in a free atmosphere. Based on the proposal of Amir Amanullah, it was

resolved that the Loya Jirgah should be held in Kabul every three years, and it should discuss issues pertaining to State's accomplishments and other local problems. This Loya Jirgah also confirmed the establishment of consultative sessions.

After the complete restoration of independence of Afghanistan, Amanullah Khan initiated certain social reforms, which were whole-heartedly welcomed by the people. In the international arena, the government of newly-freed Afghanistan pursued an active and positive policy. For instance, it established diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union, Britain, Italy, France, Germany, Poland, Belgium, Turkey, Egypt and Iran.

After successive defeats and repulsions, British colonialists resolved to overthrow Amani's power through subversive acts, armed agitations and install a puppet regime in Afghanistan. Hostile propaganda was launched against the reforms of the Amani government.

The Loya Jirgah of 1924 was convened in such conditions. It was attended by 1,050 representatives of the people, including ulema, clergymen, reputed chieftains, elders of tribes, civil and high military officials.

The Loya Jirgah, which was held in Paghman, convened numerous sessions and assessed the entire gamut of activities of the government during the five-year period, the domestic and foreign policy as well as prospects for Afghan-Soviet friendship.

The fundamental document signed at this Jirgah was the first Islamic constitution, which had already been presented to the representatives of the people. Convocation of this Jirgah tangibly helped in putting out the flames of agitation in Khost at that time. There were also conservatives and followers of the old regime among the participants of this Jirgah. They were against the broad reforms which undermined the basis of the feudal system. They found out that all these reforms went against their privileges and interests. Such forces opposed broad amendments to the rights of women, system of education, civil liberties like freedom of speech, belief, etc.

However, it is hard to overestimate the significance of this Jirgah that endorsed the first constitution of Afghanistan, thus providing a legal document which became basis for subsequent reforms.

In 1928, another Jirgah took place following the seven-month visit of King Amanullah to a number of European and Asian countries. King Amanullah, who was really impressed by progress in Europe and its advancement, honestly endeavoured to accelerate the process of reforms and take Afghanistan away from backwardness and poverty.

That is why King Amanullah declared the convocation of Loya Jirgah participated in by representatives of broad sections of the public — ulema, the clergy, tribesmen, intelligentsia, and women.

The Loya Jirgah discussed various issues in its five-day session. It endorsed 14 laws and regulations. It also approved transformation of the State Council into the National Council, establishment of new organs and institutions, a new coat of arms and the State Flag. The Jirgah also adopted concrete measures for prevention of violations of the laws enacted by civil employees. It abolished the titles of nobility and sought to conform the reforms in the existing judicial system.

Violating all international norms and principles, British colonialism sank as low as to superimpose pictures of naked British girls on to the photographs of the Queen of Afghanistan and spread them in the territory of Afghanistan so as to convince the Afghan people that King Amanullah had become an infidel.

Unable to resist conspiracies hatched by internal reaction and imperialism, the government of Amanullah Khan lost support inside the country and finally was overthrown in 1929. After that for another long period feudal and pre-feudal policy was imposed on Afghanistan.

During the Second World War (1939-1945), the Hitlerite Germany tried to attract new governments within its fold, to use them against its adversaries in the war. In such conditions a Loya Jirgah was called in 1941.

Elected representatives, members of the National Assembly, ministers and high-ranking civil and military officials participated in that Jirgah. This Loya Jirgah endorsed Afghanistan's neutral policy and its pursuit by the government. It laid emphasis on the policy of peace and co-existence of the government with its neighbours and all countries of the world. That Loya Jirgah played a significant role in preserving the position of Afghanistan as an independent and neutral country.

After the Second World War, Afghanistan was faced with serious dangers. It occupied the centre of attention in the political and military strategy of the United States. A peaceful solution for the self-determination of the Pashtuns was set forth by Afghanistan. Military pacts were signed by Pakistan and the United States in 1954, as a result of which the former became a member of SEATO and CENTO. The mid-fifties crisis in the relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan brought the two countries on the brink of war. In such conditions a Loya Jirgah was called on November 13, 1955 in Kabul participated in by 371 members.

After three days of discussions, the Loya Jirgah decided that Afghanistan was duty-bound to defend the right to self-determination of the people of Pashtunistan and raise its defence power for safeguarding its own independence and territorial integrity. This Loya Jirgah endorsed Resolution No. 72 dated October 14, 1955 of the House of Representatives and Senate.

In 1964, a Loya Jirgah participated in by 452 members, was called. After ten days of discussions this Loya Jirgah endorsed a new constitution. It also worked out and endorsed two other documents, the declaration on the issue of Pashtunistan and the declaration on supporting the neutral policy of Afghanistan. Thus, the Loya Jirgah of 1964 became a landmark in the socio-political history of Afghanistan, which should have guided the country from a totalitarian to a constitutional monarchy.

In July 1973, a non-violent military coup replaced monarchy by a republican system in Afghanistan. In 1976 a Loya Jirgah held for endorsing a new constitution and electing President participated in by 352 delegates, adopted the new constitution and re-elected Mohammad Daud President for another term of six years.

The victory of the national democratic April Revolution in 1978 opened up the way for the practical realization of long-cherished aspirations of the people of Afghanistan. The first step in interference in the internal affairs of Afghanistan was discussed at a NATO symposium in the United States only a few months after the victory of the April Revolution in Afghanistan.

Another Loya Jirgah was convened in 1985. It was held in Kabul with the participation of representatives of all strata and classes.

After a three-day session, the Loya Jirgah endorsed four main documents concerning the vital issues pertaining to the country's domestic and foreign policies.

The Loya Jirgah viewed with appreciation the fraternal assistance rendered to our country by the Soviet Union, and the Afghan-Soviet friendship and cooperation in various spheres. The Jirgah also declared that the stationing of the limited Soviet military contingent in Afghanistan is vital till foreign interference in the internal affairs of the country ceases. It also manifested the universal will of the Afghan people in the cessation of war and establishment of peace in the country, settlement of the internal situation and issues around Afghanistan.

Thus, during the long history of Afghanistan, Jirgahs have played an important role in forming and developing such a multinational country as Afghanistan.

FRATERNAL NATIONALITIES

Hazaras



Performing
Nowrooz
(New Year's)
prayer

Among other nationalities residing in Afghanistan, whose origin and history still pose many questions, one can name the Hazaras. The Hazara nationality, numbering around 2 million people, inhabit mainly areas in the central Afghanistan and its adjacent areas. These people are considered to be one of the oldest and most ancient settlers of this area, where they emerged and have been living since times immemorial.

However, a number of tales and legends on the past and origin of these people are in vogue. Unfortunately, still no comprehensive, all-out researches, which would have been able to give authentic information on the existing questions, have been carried out.

Discussions on issues pertaining to ethnography, history, settlement, languages and beliefs of Hazaras, as well as the emergence and meaning of the very term "Hazara" are in the

centre of attention of Orientalists all over the world.

Unfortunately, the views and opinions expressed on each of these issues are not based on all-embracing anthropological data, and thus cannot be considered authentic.

Nature and Geography of Hazarajat

Hazaras mostly live in vast mountainous area, commonly known as "Hazarajat", that includes southern and northern parts of the Hindukush Mountains and the ranges of Mount Baba, on the Central Plateau.

Being located in the heart of the country, Hazarajat is linked with other parts of Afghanistan through numerous passes, such as the Hajigak Pass (located at an altitude of 3,300 metres above the sea level), Honai Pass (3,100 metres above the sea le-

vel), Shibar Pass (3,015 metres) as well as a number of others. The worn-out stones of these passes have witnessed numerous conquerors and trade caravans passing through these steep cliffs; many a traveller has found his grave here while traversing Hazarajat on the way to China and India.

Though the nature here is quite severe, one cannot help admiring the grandeur of the snow-capped mountainous peaks.

Since Hazarajat is a mountainous area with plenty of snow, many rivers and streams originate here, the main one being the Hermand River, which is over 800 km long.

Another attraction of Hazarajat, which can be called one of the wonders of nature, are five glacial lakes of *Band-i-Amir* (Amir's Dam) located at an altitude of 3,000 metres above the sea level, 75 km away from Bamian. The depth of some parts of Band-i-



mountainous regions can be stated as geographical reasons for the economic backwardness, it should not be forgotten that these difficult geographical conditions had also nurtured the landholders, cattle-breeders and artisans who had qualities of hard work and high skill.

Let us remind that the hard-working people of Hazaras are the masters of cultivation in high mountains.

For decades, the economic backwardness of Hazara provinces was combined with cultural backwardness. In Hazarajat today, there are practically no big city centres, centres for agricultural services, schools and medical institutions. The low level of material production and the lack of a specific script have prevented the growth of the traditional culture of the toiling Hazara people.

Hazara woman with a religious symbol, *Janda*

Though money is so hard-earned, buying presents for children is pleasure

Amir is estimated to be 64 metres. The water from these lakes flows to the north.

As to climate of Hazarajat, springs and summers here, though charming, are very short, and falls and winters are quite long. Moreover, intense cold that lasts for six months aggravates the economic situation of the area. But the people here do not surrender to the hardships of nature and do not let the wheel of life stop its onward move.

Economic Development

As a result of the careless policies of the past regimes, not even a single industrial establishment was set up in this area in spite of the scientific data that all conditions such as natural resources, water and manpower were available for creating a flourishing modern economy there.

Though natural conditions and lack of sufficient land for agriculture in



Religion

Before the advent of Islam, in some parts of Hazara-populated territory Buddhism was common, while in other regions Zoroastrianism was professed. Even now, as eternal monuments to those great civilizations, two colossal figures of Buddha can be seen in Bamiyan, while in some parts of Hazarajat ancient conical towers still testify to the fact that Zoroastrianism once flourished here. Moreover, some traditions stemming from those times can be traced in the beliefs of the Shiite Moslems.

Due to the fact that Hazarajat was relatively isolated from the rest of the country, and was temporarily part of one or another kingdom or empire, Islam was completely accepted here only after it had joined the modern Afghan state.

After the advent of Islam, most Hazaras became the followers of the Shiite sect of this religion, though there are some who follow the Sunni sect as well. The Shiites, in their turn, are divided into the followers of the Ja'fari Faq and the Ismailia sects.

For many decades these religious differences were used for stirring up national differences and keeping up the isolation of the Hazaras from the national mainstream.

During the last few years steps have been taken to remove differences stemming from religious background, and the trusts of Hazaras became legal.

Customs and Traditions

Like everywhere else in Afghanistan, the Hazaras are fond of various celebrations which are mostly observed collectively. Such national holidays as *Nourooz* (New Year's Day, which, according to Moslem Calendar, is observed on the 21st of March, which heralds the beginning of the spring sowing campaign for peasants), *Ids* (religious holidays connected with the end of the Moslem fasting month of *Ramadan* and celebrations of performing annual Haj pilgrimage usually accomplished with slaughtering a sacrificial animal), observing *Moharram* (martyrdom of Hazrat Hussain, a Moslem saint, kept especially sacred by Shiites) are widely celebrated by Hazaras, as well as others like weddings, funerals, almsgiving, etc.

However, we think that the description of a typical Hazara custom will be of some interest to our readers. This is *Dig Shariki*, which means the

collective participation in social occasions, as well as sharing feelings both pleasant and sorrowful. This particular custom stems from the feeling that has developed with the passage of time that, only being cohesive, they (Hazaras) would be able to preserve their national identity, would be able to survive through every hardship and misfortune. *Dig Shariki* is observed in specific areas and by groups close to each other from the view point of working site and kinship. The importance and solemnity of *Dig Shariki* is particularly felt on sorrowful occasions like death of one of the members of a family. For instance, in case a person dies in a Hazara community, all its members, like the members of a single family, observe the funeral and mourning ceremonies and are duty-bound to prepare bread and meals served at these ceremonies for three days.

A Look at Hazara History

The Hazaras appeared in this land in the distant past. That was a time of mass migration, a time when great states could rise and fall easily. Alien armies repeatedly overran our country and the valorous Hazara forefathers used to defend their independence and resist the occupationists in those difficult days. Neither Genghis-khan, nor Tamerlane, nor Babur, nor Nadir Afshar, founders of great eastern empires, could make the peace-loving Gharjistan (under this name present-day Hazarajat was known) submit to their will.

We can find in no historical book or legend of the people any mentioning of the reign of alien rulers in the land of Hazaras.

Foundation of the independent state of Afghanistan opened up a new page in the history of Hazara people.

Close commercial, religious, linguistic and cultural relations used to unite the inhabitants of Gharjistan with their neighbouring people and provide the objective conditions for the inclusion of Hazaras in a united and independent Afghanistan.

The foundation of a united state should have ended the selfishness of feudals and landlords, who always fought each other and robbed the toiling people. The best sons of Hazara people realized this very well and supported the efforts of Ahmad Shah Durrani in the formation and consolidation of a united state in the land of Afghans. The name of Darwish Ali Khan Hazara, who made a significant contribution to the process of formation of the Afghan state, is worth-mentioning here. Ahmad Shah Baba valued highly the services of Darwish Ali Khan and entrusted him with the administration of the large province of Herat. The wise Hazara worked

Street vendors of sweets





National
Jirgah of
Hazaras

in this post till the very last day of his life (1772).

The valorous Hazara army men played a great role in the defence of the borders of the country. One should recall the gallantry of the heroic Hazaras who, under the banner of Shah Mahmood Hotaki, fought against the occupationists. One should also remember the heroic Hazara tribes who won honour in the battle-field of Maiwand. In the decisive moments of this great battle Shir Mohammad Khan Hazara, the commander of 4,000 fighters of the same nationality valorously attacked the British forces and created havoc amid their ranks.

In the battle of Maiwand many Hazara heroes sacrificed their lives. The memory of the patriots and their comrades-in-arms is still fresh in the grateful hearts of the people of Afghanistan.

Hazara fathers and forefathers in the Third Anglo-Afghan War (1919) fought side by side with Pashtuns and Tajiks and heroically struggled for regaining the independence of their beloved country, and laid the foundation of national economy and culture. All the Afghan patriots remember with pride and honour their great participation and glorious victories.

But the history of Hazara people also contains pages of injustice and cruelty that should not be glossed over without pain.

During the 10 years' war Amir Abdurrahman (1888—1897) waged against the Hazara people, many villages and farmlands were destroyed and thousands of Hazara toilers killed. This war brought great misery to Hazaras. Almost all Hazara-inhabited regions launched a stubborn resistance against the Amir's troops.

Mir Mohammad, Azim Beg Sepahi, Mohammad Amir Beg Ilkhani, Gulistan Khan and other Hazara tribal chiefs heroically defended their people. But the forces were not equal to those of the Amir. All those who tried to defend their freedom were put to death, and the prisoners-of-war were for years living the humiliating life of slaves. The Hazarajat mountains were put to the sword, the clear waters of the rivers turning red with blood; no more did the birds sing and for long sorrow loomed over the land of Hazaras.

Amir Amanullah Khan, the reformer king and great friend of Hazara people, alleviated the pains of these people to some extent. But after a decade of his enlightened reign, the situation took a turn for the worse for

Hazaras. Poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, social and national inequality became their lot.

Reactionary Afghan rulers carried on their genocidal policies and mercilessly annihilated the Hazaras. Their youths were recruited to the army and sent to the regions that were harmful for health. But political deprivation was even more intolerable. Under the government of Mohammad Hashim, the royal officials, looting poor peasants, craftsmen and traders, in fact, went out of control. In the entire state apparatus and in localities the number of employees of Hazara nationality never exceeded 20 per cent.

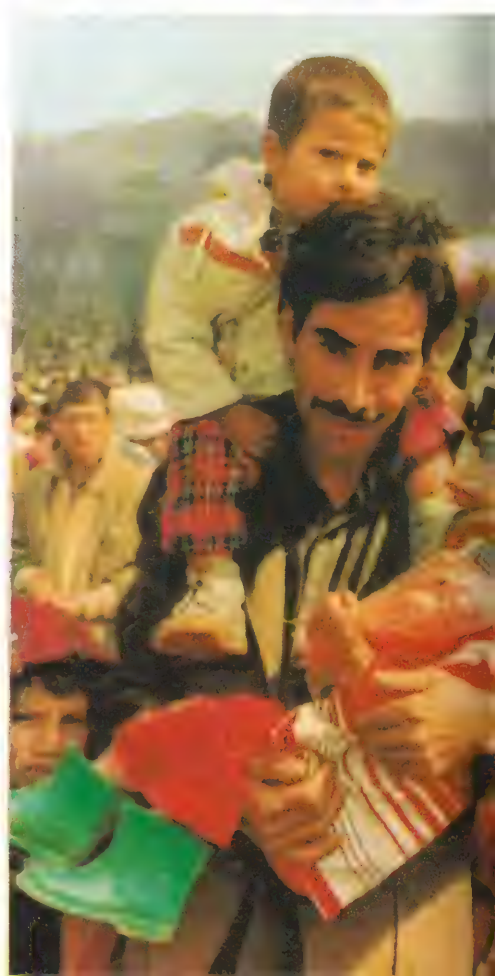
Merciless terror was unleashed against the leading Hazaras. A large number of Hazara tribal chiefs and valiant fighters, such as Nahib Salar Sayed Ahmad, Shah Noor, Ghulam Nabi Khan, Chapashakh, Abraham Gowsawar, Alama Sayed Esmail Balkhi, Sayed Esmail Lolanji, Fateh Mohammad Firqamisher, Barat Ali Taj and others, were imprisoned.

Among the fighters who participated in the movement against reactionary monarchy, the famous Hazara

(Continued on page 30)

PANORAMA

NOWROOZ — AFGHAN NEW YEAR





Janda is the banner hoisted on the occasion of the New Year

Spring is coming

For young Kabulites this way of travelling is both usual and pleasant: in father's arms and on his shoulders

A family photo in *Bagh-i-Bala* (Upper Garden), favourite recreation place for Kabul inhabitants

Nowrooz bazaar



INDUSTRY

Castrol: Afghan-American Joint Institution

In a workshop
of the com-
pany



A significant feature of the economic scene in Afghanistan today is the varied nature of its economic enterprises. The private sector thrives along with the State sector, and there are also numerous joint companies owned by Afghan and foreign share-holders.

This contributes to economic growth, and is done with full state patronage.

Castrol Machine Oil Company is one of such joint companies, which has rendered valuable services in Afghanistan over the past 17 years.

The company was established in 1971 with an initial capital of 26 million Afghanis and a working capital of 36 million Afghanis in Pul-i-Charkhi industrial estate. At that time, 72 per cent of its share-holders were foreigners and 28 per cent were domestic traders.

Last year, the government of Afghanistan, realizing the significance and role of the private sector in promoting the socio-economic growth of the country, endorsed the law on foreign and domestic investments. According to this legislation, the share of foreign capital holders should not exceed 49 per cent, and the share of domestic traders should not be less than 51 per cent. Thus, the surplus shares of the *Castrol* company were purchased by the government of Afghanistan as was provisioned by the law.

Today, the main share-holders of *Castrol Machine Oil Company* are the Ministry of Finance, Central Bank, three Afghan national traders, *Sherkat-i-Service*, *Falcon Petroleum Corporation*, New York, and Abdul Jalil, an American national.

This company has an oil base with a capacity of 12,000 tonnes of oil, a steam unit and a well-equipped laboratory producing 4,500 gallons of lubricating oil per day.

In addition to the needs of the armed forces, it meets 60 per cent of the lubricating oil needs of the country. The oil is reportedly of better quality and lower priced than that available in the open market. To cite an example, 66 types of lubricating oils are produced by *Castrol Machine Oil Company*. Previously the raw materials were imported from the Gulf region, including Iran, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. Supplies were routed through Pakistan. When Pakistan banned the supply of these materials through its territory, the company established commercial relations with European countries. Now raw materials are imported from the *Castrol Company* of England via Leningrad and then through Hairatan port on the Amu River in northern Afghanistan.

The price of one gallon of machine oil in the open market is 1,450 Afgha-

nis while it is sold for 1,200 Afghanis by the company. There are 60 workers on its pay roll.

The company has different sections for producing lubricating oils and gas, a laboratory for analysis, a unit for manufacturing tanks, and sections for repairing barrels.

Till 1976, the company was supervised by a British specialist from *Castrol* and five Pakistani experts. Now it is run by Afghan engineers and the entire work is carried out by local employees.

According to **Haji Mohammad Maftoon**, *President of Castrol Oil*, the government has, in recent years, provided many facilities to encourage local traders and share-holders. Provision of land on an easy long-term credit basis for construction of factories, grant of banking credits, intensification of forwarding and transportation, customs exemptions, electric power supplies, telephone, roads, etc., are among the facilities provided by the government.

Haji Maftoon added that in 1982 and 1986, the Pashtany Tejaraty Bank granted a loan of 28 million Afghanis to the company. This helped significantly in the supply of raw materials and development of the factory.

The highest and most competent organ of the factory is the general meeting of share-holders, which is held twice a year. In this, members

discuss the existing problems of the factory and work out ways of their solution. The selection of the president of the factory and composition of the board of directors is also decided at the general meeting. This high-powered body is also authorized to elect a non-share-holder as president. "For instance, I am the president of the company, but not a share-holder," Maftoon clarified.

Hafizullah Rahimi, who is president of *Sherkat-i-Service*, represents the foreign share-holders in Afghanistan. High demand for its production, economizing of foreign exchange otherwise spent on similar foreign production bringing about better conditions for a number of local workers, selling our products at a fair price compared to imported oils and utilization of local raw materials are the main economic features of the company at present, he said.

It is proposed to build, in the future, units for producing grease and anti-freeze water. The activities of mixed enterprises intensify the process of the country's economic development. This economic reality is enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of Afghanistan:

"To develop and grow the economy of the country, the government permits foreign investment in the Republic of Afghanistan and regulates it as per the law."

Article Five of the Regulation on Investments in Private Sector says: "The economic productive and service institutions can be established on the basis of the following criteria:

— enterprises with mixed capital in which the share of the state can be 51 per cent or more but not less than this figure;

— enterprises established with private foreign capital, its share must not exceed 49 per cent of the total capital."

Among other joint industrial, commercial and transport enterprises in the country, which provide high-quality production to Afghan market one can name *Hoechst*, a pharmaceutical company, whose Western share-holder is *Hoechst AG Frankfurt-am-Main*; *Ahoo Shoe Manufacturing Company*, owned by private Afghan entrepreneurs and Swiss Company *Wedmer and Pagani*; *Afghan-Nichi Ltd.* whose foreign partner and share-holder is *Nichi Populist Co.* of Japan; *AFSOTR*, joint transportation institution of Afghanistan and the Soviet Union; *Samir Sponge Ltd Co.* whose share-holders are Afghan and Indian national traders and *Afkara*, a joint Afghan-Czechoslovak company. All these companies enjoy full government assistance and, at the same time, function independently.

By Farouq

(Continued from p. 3)

Another fact is also of immense importance today that a large number of the opponents lay down their arms and join national reconciliation. Thus, the irreconcilable counter-revolutionaries backed by the reaction of the region and imperialism who still continue the senseless war draw themselves towards their own isolation and political failure.

The process of national reconciliation has also a constructive impact on the socio-economic growth of the country. During the first year of the peace programme, tens of economic establishments and institutions have been set up. State, joint and private investments have acquired dynamic dimensions. Over 30 defunct institutions have become active during this period. Many new projects have been completed prior to the planned targets. The volume of industrial products has increased by 3.5 per cent. Agricultural products have satisfactorily boosted. For instance, 138,000 tons of wheat have been harvested despite the drought.

Salaries of over 700,000 employees have been raised during the last year. State assistance have tangibly increased in sections having lower income. School students will receive uniform and free breakfast next academic year. As a whole, the indices of socio-economic growth of the country have improved to that extent which has no parallel before and after revolution.

The policy of national reconciliation, in fact, is the restructuring of all foundations in the field of social life. Restructuring whose guiding star is the experience of the ten years of the revolution should ensure the complete victory of peace, democracy and social progress. This restructuring is being implemented on the basis of prin-

ciples and values of the Constitution of the Republic of Afghanistan which is the basic legislative document of the national reconciliation, that was enacted after the public debate by the historic Loya Jirgah last year.

With the endorsement of the Constitution and the election of the President, the presidential system of administration has been created in the country. One-party political system which existed in the first decade of the revolution is reconstructed on the pluralism basis. Coalition administration which has been created at all levels is expanding and consolidated.

The parliamentary elections in which all political parties and organizations will have the right of open activity is to be held in the near future.

Therefore, as a uniting platform of all forces of Afghan society the policy of national reconciliation will bring about possibilities and conditions turning the second decade of the April Revolution into the years of ensuring the invincibility of the process of historic transformation, complete repulsion of war, maintaining of national accord and attraction of all forces of society to construction and creativity for the benefit of man, his present and future well-being.

Despite the fact that the accomplishment of such a process was by no means easy, the first decade of the revolution were the years in which the ice of past decades and centuries has melted, making the roaring flood of advance towards a new future. Notwithstanding its complications, it can be considered the most important stage in growth and evolution of Afghan society.

By H. Khorasani

SOCIAL WELFARE

Family Guidance



Awaiting their time to see the doctor

...In 1979 Aziza Begum was 31 years old. But she felt much beyond her years, was tired, irritable and depressed; she felt she did not have strength to go on with the task of looking after her husband and children. Then an acquaintance urged her to contact the Afghan Family Guidance Association (AFGA) for help. At their clinic in the Mir Wais Maidan, she was found to be suffering from acute anaemia and general debility. And with reason. In her 16 years of marriage, Aziza had borne eight children in rapid succession, and had never been able to regain her strength. She has been on Norylene contraceptive pills ever since (with short breaks every six months), has recovered much of her health, and has the much needed energy to look after her family.

Razia Begum, at 20, is a different case. Married at 14, she is the mother of three children, and has opted for an intra uterine contraceptive device, called the loop, which will help her to space her children's births according to her needs. Thirty-nine-year-old Najiba, on the other hand, has settled for the latest Depo Provera injection, which will help her plan her family in the manner she desires.

All these three women represent the changing attitude of Afghan women to the pressing problem of family welfare. Their idea, they tell you, is family planning — the planning and

spacing of births in the larger interest of their own and their family's welfare. At the end of 1986 there were 138,000 women in the country who had thus been helped by the AFGA, the sole institution in the country providing motivation in family planning and contraceptive services.

Started in 1967 as a non-governmental body functioning under the aegis of the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF), the AFGA today operates mainly through the Mother and Child Clinics in Kabul and the provinces, and where these are lacking, through the local health centres. The AFGA has its own doctors, nurses and administrative staff, engaged specifically in the task of explaining the family planning ideas to women. The work has not been easy, particularly in the early years, but today more women seem to be accepting the idea of planning and spacing the births of their children both in their own and their children's interests. The fact that they are in a position to choose and decide gives them the right of individual choice. It is a small step, and many more need to be reached for the programme to be meaningful, but it is of great significance in the field of public health.

Without help in timing, spacing and limiting pregnancy, women and children are re-exposed to grave risks like foetal deaths, abnormalities and

child mortality. And in developing countries like Afghanistan the difficult economic conditions make the role of family planning a crucial one. But in view of past experience in other countries, haste is being avoided. On the other hand, the effort is to make women understand the implications of scientific family planning through lectures, demonstrations of films and TV as well as radio programmes. Significantly, the AFGA has from the start addressed itself to the women directly, previous developmental experience in other countries having shown that for the success of any welfare-oriented programme, it is the women, not the men, who must be reached because it is they who are directly affected.

The work of the AFGA is of two kinds — helping women to plan their families with the aid of contraceptive devices, and helping childless couples to have children. Not mutually contradictory, as it may appear at first sight, but of the true essence of family welfare.

The first function of the AFGA is centred mainly at the Mother and Child Clinics in Kabul and the provinces. Here the staff advises and counsels women, who are sent to them directly or through the mother and child doctors. There are 36 family planning centres in Kabul and 32 in the provinces, each with an average daily turnover of about 20-30 women. The cases are typical — women who married at an early age, have had many children in rapid succession, and are weak and undernourished as a consequence. They come of their own choice, some after three, some after as many as nine children. But in this vital field of public health, it is never too late, as they have realized for themselves. Each woman is then explained the various alternatives open to her — contraceptive pills, IUCDs, contraceptive creams and even the latest Depo Provera injections. The decision as to which device to adopt is hers — subject, of course, to medical advice according to individual cases. According to AFGA doctors, the pills remain the most popular device at all clinics. In no case, however, are pills permitted continuously beyond six months, after which a new technique is temporarily adopted. Close follow-up is maintained through the patients' medical charts, and they are also cautioned as to possible side effects of various devices, in which case a different course is adopted. Most women this correspondent spoke to, however, did not have any fixed idea of family size or number of children they would like to have. Their concern is with their own and their children's health.

The AFGA is also conducting a training course for nurses and midwives at the Ministry of Public Health.



Forty were trained in 1987 and another 40 were scheduled for this year, after which they will help the AFGA in spreading the family planning message. Thus, a slow integration of family planning with the MOPH is envisaged. This training of MOPH personnel is especially significant in the light of the fact that their perception of the benefits of family planning has been found to be low. A young women's training scheme is also under way, and during 1987 25 women and girls were educated in the basic principles of health, family welfare and mother-and-child care. The scheme is valuable for the future because this is a generation that is very receptive to new and progressive ideas. Home and hospital visits by AFGA workers, film shows and radio and TV advertising are also utilized by the Association for explaining how family planning is essential to family welfare, and accords with religious sentiments. At no stage is any effort made to impose upon the women the number of children they should have. That is a matter of individual choice, a personal matter left to them to decide.

There has been a slow, but decidedly significant, change in women's attitudes over the years, say AFGA officials. Today none of the women who visit the clinics for guidance are resistant to the idea. Despite the sensitive nature of the programme, the 138,000 women who adopted various techniques during the previous year, are a small increase over that of 1985. But as mentioned earlier, in this field even a small increase is a significant step forward. The AFGA officials are quick to point out that, while they plan for a 10—20 per cent increase each year, they have not fixed any numerical targets on account of the highly motivational nature of the programme. The fact that the IPPF has increased its annual allocation to Afghanistan to \$ 247,200 for 1988 as against \$ 224,000 in 1987 is in

itself indicative of expected levels of increase.

This, however, is one aspect of family planning. The other — helping childless couples to have children — is equally important, and reflects the comprehensive nature of the programme. The AFGA runs an Infertility Centre at the Malalai Maternity Hospital at Kabul. About 9,000 cases have been registered here since its inception in 1984, and of the 2,000 cases last year about 200 have, so far, been successfully helped. According to doctors, infertility is a problem in Afghanistan mainly on account of post-partum or post-delivery infections. Biological causes of infertility are fewer. It has also been found that in about 60 per cent of the cases women are responsible for infertility, and in the remaining 40 per cent — men. But the greatest problem the doctors at the Infertility Centre have to contend with is the human one — the men will come reluctantly for help and will not easily accept responsibility for infertility. Nevertheless, when they are persuaded they are amenable, like 30-year-old Mohammad Wali, married for eight years with no offspring. At the Infertility Centre he was found to be suffering from oligospermia. He agreed to treatment at the urology centre, and is now a proud father. Doctors, however, maintain they could achieve a greater percentage of success if they had more equipment and medicines. And that remains the chief concern of the centre — to acquire these as soon as possible.

While there is much scope for expansion of present activities, the AFGA workers are also operating under considerable constraints, chief of which is staff shortage. The entire country has a staff of just 66 persons, the rest being engaged from other agencies. There is also a locational problem. At present, Afghanistan falls under the Arab Zone of the IPPF and



officials insist it would be more convenient if, instead, it was in the Indian Ocean Zone with headquarters at Delhi, India. The present HQ for Afghanistan is in Tunisia, which being far away presents not merely organizational hurdles, but an additional economic burden as well.

At present, the AFGA is working towards the evolution of a national population policy for the country. While Afghanistan is fortunate in that it does not suffer from the problem of overpopulation, a population policy would nevertheless go a long way towards ensuring public health.

Much remains to be done yet. Considering mothers and children comprising about 60 per cent of the population of the country, existing services touch only a small segment of the people. There are some areas in Kabul which have no MCH clinic or other health services in the vicinity. At the same time the existing services are unable to provide adequate facilities for the rapid influx of population into Kabul. About 17 per cent of new-born children are still underweight, and child and maternal mortality still remains high. This only underlines the need for continued endeavour in the matter — both individual and official.

She has come to the doctor for advice

Necessary measurements for filling in the chart

By Radha Rastogi

Coupons to Supply Food

The administrative ethos in Afghanistan has been to try and compensate the government servant in as many ways as possible. Free transport to and from office, free lunch at the work place, and coupons for purchase of essential items of daily use at subsidized rates, are some of the privileges that have been extended over the years. Each has contributed, to a considerable extent, to improve the quality of life.

In a coupon shop

In June 1987, another bonus was announced. The hitherto subsidized flour and cooking oil available to all

coupon holders would now be given free. It was a major step forward, not only in ensuring that these two essential items would be available (that had existed earlier) — but in ensuring free supply of these two basic items of consumption to all government employees. The scheme has since been extended to cover employees of all State associations as well, like the Democratic Youth Organization, Afghanistan Women's Council, AFSOTR, etc. The step has had a double impact — by helping people as much as possible, and at the same time help control



inflation. Uncontrolled wage hikes lead to rise in prices of essential commodities and become meaningless in the absence of supportive welfare measures.

Earlier each single coupon holder was entitled to

28 kg of flour and three-and-a-half kg of cooking oil at 240 Afghanis and 138 Afghanis respectively. Today every coupon holder is entitled to 28 kg of free flour and 3 kg of free oil, if single; double these quantities if married. In the provinces grain is often distributed instead of flour. An unmarried employee with dependent parents is also entitled to the double quota; however, after marriage further increase on account of spouse or children is not given. If a husband and wife are both government employees, only one individual may be a coupon holder. The regulations have apparently been worked out keeping equity and benefit of the maximum number in view.

Most beneficiaries of the coupon system see it as great relief, particularly the free supply of flour and oil. "It goes a long way in reducing our expenditure burden," says Naseema, a seamstress who runs a tailoring establishment in the heart of Kabul. She herself is not a coupon holder, but her husband, who works in a State ministry, is. The free 56 kg of flour and 6 kg oil have helped raise their standard of living. "The money we spent earlier on paying for these two essential items is now spent on other necessary items for my husband and three children," Naseema elaborates. "There is no doubt it has helped," says Najib Popal, who works in a State ministry. He is still single, but he is supporting his aged parents and two unmarried sisters; they all get the benefit of his entitlement as a government employee. "The bonus of getting free coupons is a great incentive to seek government jobs," says Jumma Khan, a carpenter who works in the old city. His entire family helps in the business, so they are not beneficiaries of this scheme. "But I have seen the relief it has brought to my brother who works with the education department and lives separately with his wife and three children," he adds. Says one mother whose daughter works with the health department: "Her salary is not much, but she gets her coupons which mean a great deal to us".

By and large, it is found that most coupon holders draw and use their entire entitlement of both flour and oil. The former is either baked into *nan* (leavened bread) at home, or given to one of the many *nan* shops in Kabul to be baked at a nominal charge. There is general satisfaction regarding the quality of flour, but reactions to oil vary. But this is a matter of personal preference: while some prefer not to use it, some well-to-do people maintain they regularly cook with it, and have no complaints.

Other items now sold at the government shops at subsidized rates are tea, rice, milk, soap, matches and blades. Here, again, the financial benefit is substantial. For instance, each married individual is entitled to buy 500 gms of tea per month at the government shops at a cost of 125 Afghanis, while in the market the same brand and quality sells upwards of 200 Afghanis. Similarly, each person gets 7 cakes of soap per month for 100 Afghanis, while in the open market the same number cost 140 Afghanis. Milk and rice have not been available at the government fair price shops for some months. Food department officials say this is on account of import problems. But an in-built safeguard exists in that once they are available, these items will be sold with retrospective effect, and each single individual will get his accumulated quota of 500 gms milk and 11 kg rice for every month that it was not available. Milk at 70 Afghanis for a 500 mg tin in the fair price shops is far more

desirable than the same amount in the market for double the price. The cost of rice, too, is similarly much lower.

According to food department estimates there are 355,000 coupon holders in Afghanistan, the bulk of whom are in Kabul. There are at present 99 fair price shops in the capital, and 71 in the provinces. While the maximum strength of each store should be not more than 2,500 persons, officials admit that in most there are either more or less registered, depending upon its location. Inevitably, therefore, the better located shops in the heart of the towns are more crowded than others. An effort has, however, been made to relieve the pressure on these shops by opening more fair price stores in government offices to cater specifically to the needs of employees in those departments. Thirty-nine such stores have, so far, been opened at various offices in the capital.

According to government estimates, the total value of State subsidy towards free flour and oil is 6 billion Afghanis a year. The government spends 480 Afghanis per individual a month on flour, 300 on oil. Says one Food Department official: "This year we distribute 94,100 tonnes of flour, 27,480 tonnes of oil, 2,141 tonnes of tea, and 73,900 tonnes of sugar to coupon holders registered at various shops throughout the country." He conceded that there is, at present, no proposal to extend free or subsidized distribution to other items, the main concern being to make available rice and milk. More items could only be considered when these are regularly available.

Up to now, the cost of subsidization of items other than flour and oil was met by importing them in excess of the actual requirement of the coupon holders and selling the excess in the open market. The funds thus generated were used to subsidize the sale of these items to coupon holders. There was, therefore, no net burden on the state exchequer.

However, food department officials say that from next year Finance Ministry will import items directly and only to the extent required for coupon holders. The subsidy will be met by the government from the budget.

The Food Department has been importing items from various countries: wheat from the USSR, oil from Norway, Malaysia and the USSR, rice from Bangla Desh, tea from India, blades from Poland, and matches from the USSR.

While the system has definitely helped in lightening people's load, some essential items being in short supply do pose a problem. Rice, for instance, is a staple item of diet in Afghanistan, but because it is entirely imported, there is difficulty in its procurement. The same is with milk. It is also commonly felt that more fair price shops are needed. More outlets in specific offices would be a great help, many consumers feel.

Cases of misuse of coupons do come to light, the most common being when a husband and wife working in two different offices each claim their separate entitlements. But the punishment meted out to such offenders is severe — if detected, coupons of both are cancelled; they also have to return to the government the amount thus misused. In the long run it is not worth it, which perhaps explains why such cases are few.

What is significant in the coupon system as it exists today is the genuine welfare orientation it is based upon. It is inevitable for consumers to criticize anything that is free, or to make suggestions that are not always practicable. Loopholes will also always exist in any system for human greed and corruption. But what must not be lost sight of in assessing such schemes is their motivation.

(R. R.)

TRADITIONS

Saga of Bride and Groom

Dressing and making up the bride — as it was in the past

Wedding ceremonies with their folkloric aspects are very interesting in Afghanistan. In different parts of this ancient country, colourful wedding ceremonies have been observed down the centuries. Although in Kabul and some other cities, the manner these ceremonies are conducted

has changed in recent decades, villages and rural areas retain traditional and genuine traits; drums are still beaten, *sornas* (oboe-like instruments) blown and guns roar to mark the ceremonies.

tribe and nationality is different. But all of them have certain similarities. Here we present the features of this wonderful ceremony in the past and present in Kabul.

Some time ago, girls and boys could not select their match them-

The wedding ceremony of each

Some time ago, girls and boys could not select their match them-



selves; they could not even see each other before the actual wedding ceremony.

Woman's appearance with an open face was a taboo in the society, and all her activities were confined to household work. Boys did not have the right to visit girls, except their close relatives. When a boy reached the marriageable age, his parents started looking for a suitable match for their son. Having found a beautiful and shapely girl among their distant relatives or close friends, they used to discuss the issue with the boy.

After obtaining the consent of their son, they would visit the house of their choice, using different pretexts to examine the girl. They gradually put the proposal to the girl's mother. In this connection, a curious custom is worth-mentioning here.

The girl's mother did not give an oral answer. Instead, she brought water and sugar for the guests, which meant that the family of the girl had given its consent to the marriage. If she brought only a *hookah* that was the sign that they did not agree to the proposal.

If the girl's family agreed, the boy's mother and female relatives would pay frequent visits to the girl's house. During this period, the two families would discuss terms and conditions, *mahar* (bride-money) and fix the time for the festivities of engagement, marriage and others. Such formalities were intentionally prolonged. If the girl's family did not delay the discussions, that would mean that the girl's parents did not have enough respect for their daughter. While the discussions were being held, the girl and her suitor could not meet or even visit each other. When the time for the open agreement came, the boy's parents and very close relatives would come to the girl's house and, upon reaching an official agreement, pray together. Then the girl's family delivered an embroidered handkerchief with sweets. That meant that the girl and the boy would be husband and wife.

The groom had to bring a dress, ornaments, mostly rings, ear-rings, necklaces, etc., on a decorated tray full of sweets to the house of the girl, two or three days after the agreement was reached.

The colourful tray was carried by women and girls, the whole procession accompanied by tambourines and dancing. On that day, the girl's house was brightly decorated and delicious food and sweet dishes were cooked for the guests and the groom.

During the period between the engagement and the wedding ceremony several other festivities took place. On national and religious holidays the family of the groom had to send gifts and dress for the bride. This tradition is still observed today. Bride-money was usually paid on the occasion of marriage, but quite often at any other time agreed upon. In rural areas, some families gave a camel or a sheep instead of cash money.

At last, the day of engagement came. For a groom who was poor this event was very trying, but for a well-to-do family it was a joyful occasion.

In the provinces, the ceremony was held at the house of the bride and in cities, in a restaurant — both at the expense of the groom. But nowadays in Kabul and some other cities, the bride's family hosts the engagement ceremony. In this ceremony, gifts are exchanged between the families of the couple. The family of the bride prepares an ornamented basket with white or blue artificial flowers and in it a big covered crystal vase is placed with sugar and sweets in front of the father or any elder relative of the groom. At the time of engagement, the richly made-up bride was brought to a room where the womenfolk were sitting. Her face was covered with a thin colourful nylon veil. The mother of the groom put a gold ring upon the bride's ring-finger.

They also carried the clothes which were bought mostly at the expense of the groom to his house, while women sang and danced all the way.

After the engagement, when the bride went out for the first time to the house of one of her relatives, the groom had to present a new dress and ornaments to her. On the eve of *Ids* (religious holidays), the groom must bring a new dress and other gifts, fried fish and sweets for the bride. This is a tradition observed by the inhabitants of Kabul even today.

By and large, the impecunious groom incurs heavy debts by the time the actual wedding ceremony takes place. Besides the bride-money, the groom has to bear all the expenses of the wedding. To provide this money almost all the grooms have to borrow heavily.

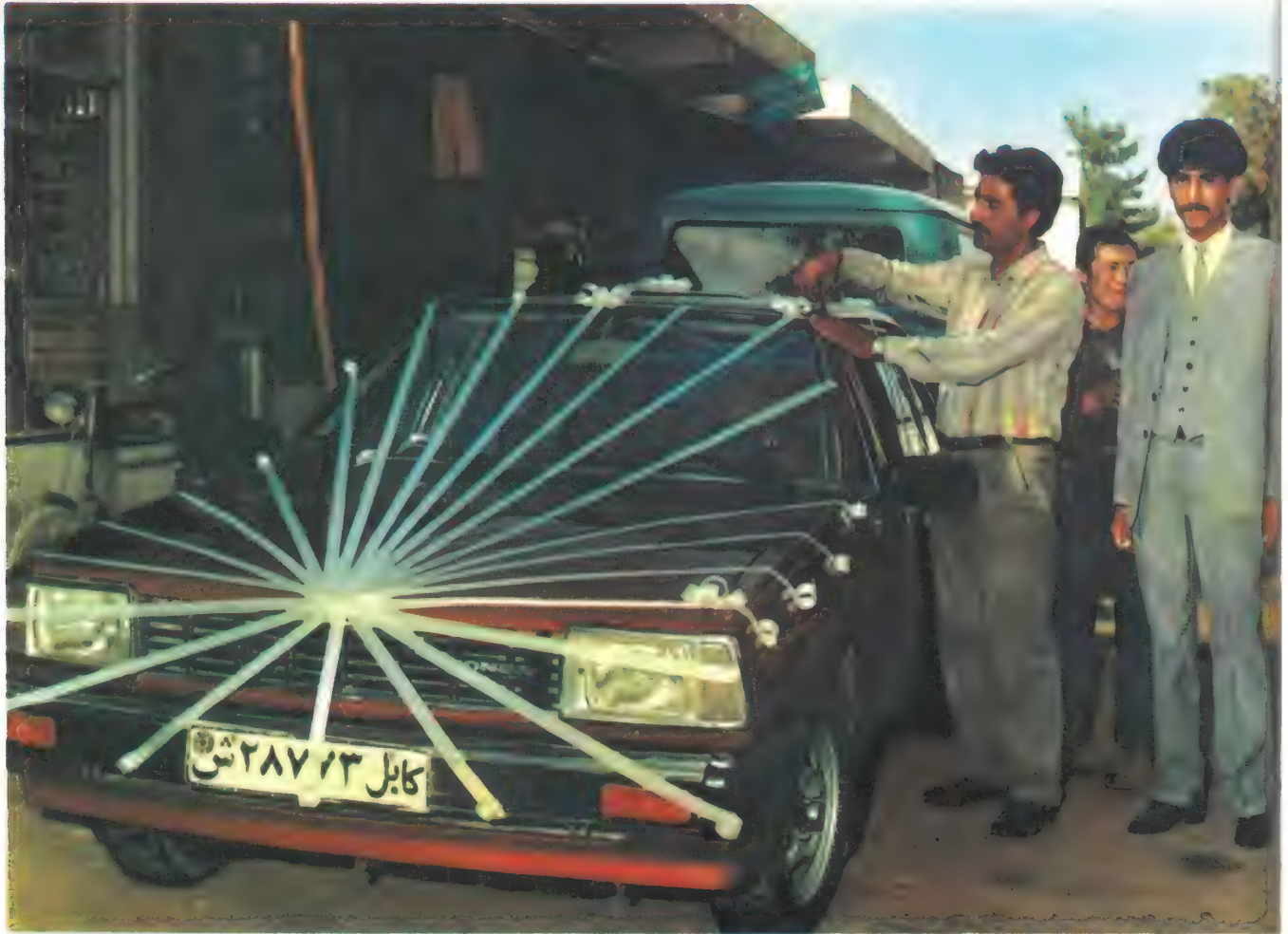
On the eve of the wedding ceremony, the groom, with his mother and very close relatives, is asked to come to the house of the bride. The groom's mother puts some henna on the palms and feet of the groom and the bride as well as all others present in the room. The bowl in which the henna is put is decorated with bright candles. Henna on the hands is covered with small embroidered kerchiefs. While the

mother is putting henna on the hands of the bride and the groom, musicians sing soft and gentle songs, called *Henna Byarin* (Bring Henna and Put it on Hands).

The relatives present in the room shower candies and sweets on the bride and the groom. Occasionally they also throw money on them. The eve of the wedding ceremony is called *Shab-e-Henna* (Henna Evening), *Henna Bandan* and *Khesh Khori* (Evening of Visits). At the festival, lanterns, candles and lamps are lit everywhere. Rich women change their dresses one after another, showing off their wealth. The following night, i. e., *Nikah*, the marriage agreement is signed or orally approved by the groom and a representative of the bride, because the bride normally does not go to *Nikah Khana* (a special room for signing the marriage contract).

For concluding the marriage contract, the bride makes her elder brother or father her representative, and then sends him along with two witnesses to the place where the contract is being signed. Witnesses kneel down before the *Imam* or a preacher; the groom is also present. After uttering this sentence, "In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful," they say to the preacher, "We confess that we are witnesses for the sake of God not for hypocrisy. *Bibi* (Miss) daughter of who has no other daughter by the same name has assigned Mr as her representative." Afterwards, the Imam or the preacher addresses the representative of the bride, "Are you the representative of Miss ? He says, "Yes, I am." The Mullah, again, asks, "You the representative of Miss, at what Marriage Portion do you want to marry the girl to Mr who is present here?" He replies, "I marry the girl to this youth (mentioning the name of the groom) at Marriage Portion of Afs on the basis of Islamic rules." The Imam repeats three times: "Do you give?" and "Do you accept?" Then the Imam puts the same question to the groom and informs him of the Marriage Portion, and the groom should answer the question three times. Afterwards, the Imam prays, and sweets are distributed among the attendants. Some families prefer to have a written document of the marriage signed by the groom, the representative of the bride, the Imam, the witnesses and the elders. Thus the colourful ceremony of the Marriage Document concludes.

Pq̄lau (famous dish of Afghan cuisine mostly served with chopped meat, vegetables and spices) and tea are served to the guests, ranging from 100 to 10,000 people.



Decorating a wedding car

Slaughtering a hen is part of the ritual on the wedding day



When *Nikah* is insured, the groom and the bride are brought to another room to sit on a thick mattress and pillow. Both of them look at each other in a mirror while a volume of the Holy Koran is placed over their heads by the bride's or the groom's mother.

During this short ceremony, a veil is put upon the couple. Afterwards, they eat a mixture of sweets placed in a bowl, called *Malida*, and drink *sherbet* (sweet drink) with it. After this, the wedding ceremony is over and the bride is brought to the house of the groom in a palanquin, carriage or car. If the houses of the couple are near to each other, the bride and the groom walk to his house, while the young relatives dance and sing *Ahesta Bero* (Step In Slowly). The elder women play on the tambourines.

In the past, the dress of the bride consisted of a shirt, loose pantaloons, a robe, a shawl, shoes, socks, ornaments and a make-up kit. The clothes of the groom consisted of an embroi-

dered white shirt, pyjamas, turban with a cap, a coat and an embroidered men's shawl.

In villages, the bride is carried on horse accompanied by a large crowd. Young relatives dance *Atan* (Afghan national dance) and guns are fired in the air so that the nearby villages are informed of the wedding.

When the bride steps into the house of the groom, she is first brought to the kitchen where she puts her finger in a dish of sweets, and then goes to the oven and gazes at the fire inside it. She is then slowly brought to the bridal chamber, which has already been decorated.

The wedding ceremony, in some regions of the country and in Kabul of ancient times, was celebrated for seven days. On the evening of the seventh day, another ceremony was held. This ceremony was similar in almost all parts of the country, but in some places it was observed on the



The tray with sweets is being carried to the bride and groom under musical accomplishment, while close male relatives are dancing

Helping the bride to special sweet dish is also part of the wedding rite

third day after the wedding. This ceremony was of particular interest to women.

The bride and the groom were asked to sit again on a thick mattress. *Palau* and tea were served while people sang and danced around them. After food and tea, the relatives and friends of the bride and the groom gave gifts and cash to the newly-weds.

In rural areas and in ancient Kabul, taking photographs or filming the ceremony and cutting a special cake by the couple were not common. But today, in Kabul and some other cities of the country, wedding ceremony is being held in a restaurant in quite a modern way, inspired by Western culture. The ceremony lasts for only few hours in a restaurant. After serving food, performing *Nikah* and cutting a special cake, the bride and the groom are carried in a decorated car to the groom's house, and the ceremony concludes.



By Z. Razban

Naiza-Bazi — Tent-Pegging

Tent-pegging is one of the ancient games that have been played in Afghanistan since times immemorial and still is popular in some parts of the country. This is an exciting game mostly played by young and strong men, skilful in horse race and attacking while on horse-back. Indulging in this game by itself is regarded as a sign of valour and bravery.

In tent-pegging the contestant while holding a two-pronged 2-metre-long bamboo spear, 10 cm in diameter, races from 200-metre distance towards a wooden peg, 40 cm long and 10 cm in diameter, driven in the ground by two-thirds. While galloping in full speed, the rider is to hit the tent peg with his spear and pull it out as he passes by.

Spear has been known as one of the most ancient weapons in Afghanistan. Even during the Aryan times, spears were used along with bows and arrows, axes and daggers. During the Graeco-Bactrian period (IV-II centuries B. C.) spears were vastly common as military

weapons. Bactrian warriors famous for their might and skills in dealing with spears frightened their enemies with their sole appearance. Covered with chain mail and bristled up with spears they made enemies take to flight from battlefields.

Spear is reported to be a favourite hunting weapon of Sultan Massoud Ghaznavid who used it in hunting lions as well as gazelles and deer. (Such hunting scenes are described in Ahmad Ali Kohzad's historical book *Lashkargah*).

Tent-pegging game appeared in the ancient times. It became quite popular all over the country during the Ghorid and Ghaznavid dynasties. Today, this game is usually a part of cultural and religious festivals or wedding ceremonies.

Being an exciting and dramatic game, tent-pegging attracts hundreds of spectators, especially children. Spectators usually line the two sides of the way where the horseman makes the run, trying to choose the spot from



where they will see the most important point of the game, i. e., the up-rooting of the wooden peg. The target is set and the run begins smoothly. But with every second it gains momentum. Galloping towards the target the horse with the rider on its back become one being whose entire energy is being accumulated for the hit. At this particular point all the spectators' eyes are pinned to the white tent peg to see what happens.

The climax of the game is when the sharp prongs of the spear pierce the peg and it is pulled out as the rider passes by. But the rider gets a point in his score only in case he manages to take the peg behind a certain line which is marked on the field.

These moments of the game when the riders participating in the competition gallop towards the peg targets are accompanied by excited shouting and screaming of their fans who cheer them up, as well as drums.

When the hit is successful they play a special beat of victory and joy. However, if the rider misses to hit the target then a special beat is played declaring the failure of the run.

Mostly several contestants one after another join the game and make the spectacular run. If they miss to pull the peg they are allowed to try it again. The results are scored on the basis of how many successful runs were made by each contestant in a given number of turns.

Tent-pegging is quite popular in Ghazni, Kandahar and Paktia provinces. In Balkh and other northern provinces, though *Buzkashi* is the most favourite game, tent-pegging is also popular with the people there.



It should be mentioned that the modern form of throwing spear with 260 cm length and 800 gm weight is also popular among sport teams in various parts of the country, both in classic and free forms.

Scenes of the
Naiza-Bazi

By Z. Razban



Naiza-Bazi
(a drawing by
Shinwari)

(Continued from page 15)

historian Faiz Mohammad Katib, author of numerous books on the history and culture of Hazarajat, is worth mentioning.

The state of affairs was like this till the April Revolution came...

After the Revolution

Among the most important questions of every revolution in a multinational country like Afghanistan are national issues. The proclamation of equality of rights of all nationalities has thus become of paramount importance for the country. But its practical implementation is still riddled with numerous problems, though a lot has been done already.

However, among the achievements of the national policy regarding the Hazara nationality, one can name the creation of the Central Council of Hazara Nationality, which deals with the most acute problems of Hazaras. The convocation of the Hazara National Jirgah is also worth mentioning among the latest achievements of the national policy of the people's power. Participated in by Dr. Najibullah, President of the Republic of Afghanistan as well as by Sultan Ali Keshtmand, Prime Minister (S. A. Keshtmand being a Hazara himself), the Hazara National Jirgah, represen-

ted by 900 delegates coming from 17 provinces, has become a landmark in Hazara history. For the first time the Hazaras were addressed by state leaders, and their problems were dealt with at the highest level; for the first time they had an opportunity to express their needs, problems and demands to the leaders themselves in a frank and friendly atmosphere.

Addressing the participants of the Jirgah, Najibullah said, "In the history of relations between the Hazara nationality and the rulers of Afghanistan, many pages have been recorded, some of them in tears and blood. These pages speak of the merciless cruelty and repression of despotic feudal regimes against this peace-loving people, undermining their rights and human dignity as well as the plunderous encroachments of Khans and lords over your peace-loving people. Other pages are written by the sweat of the brow of the working people of Hazara. In all these, we read the great role played by the Hazara people in the development of national economy and culture as well as in the construction of an independent and sovereign Afghanistan."

Prospects for the Future

The generous economic assistance given by the State to Hazaras would soon totally transform this ancient region. The growth of industry, explo-

ration of mines in Hazara regions, are possible and necessary.

The State plans to build big industrial projects in Hazarajat, as well as many schools and medical institutions.

The culture of the region and its people also must be further developed and thoroughly publicized through newspapers, books, magazines, Radio and TV programmes.

Proper development should include the religious affairs of Hazaras as well. The State plans to establish higher educational centres for both the Ismailia and the Asna Ashari sects of the Shiites, as well as expand Hazara representation in the Ministry of Islamic Affairs and Religious Trusts and the High Council of Ulema and Clergy of Afghanistan. This will enable Hazaras to contribute to the development of religious science and culture.

However, for implementing all these only plans and mere words are not enough. More than anything else, the people of Afghanistan, including the Hazara people, need peace, which has become their greatest aspiration today. The policy of national reconciliation, which is being implemented in the country, is to bring the long-awaited and lasting peace to the land of Afghans, but establishment of peace, first and foremost, is the concern of Afghans themselves.

By H. Nail

A Hazara folk music group



CULTURE

Revival of a Long-Forgotten Art

... He was walking along the street in a long white shirt with a shawl thrown over his shoulder, which flew behind his back, a tall, though a little bent man; he was walking in large strides, confidently and proudly. Beside him there is always one of his students.

Ghulam Jelani Ruhani, who is now over sixty, has devoted all his life to the art of dot miniature, conceived and created by him...

He was born into a very poor family. His father lost his eyesight when he was very young and thus could not support the family. The children had to make their own living and depend only on themselves. People say that natural talent cannot but show itself. In spite of a hard life and a difficult-for-teenager work, at the age of eleven he started drawing, without having any idea that the art of painting existed. He was noticed by others much later. Once he was even invited to participate in an exhibition. However, that was the end of it — there was no acknowledgement. He continued working and at home he went on drawing.

In his childhood, in the mosque, where he went with his father, he was once given a volume of the Holy Koran, richly decorated with miniatures. While his father was talking to the mullah, the boy was busy looking through the book. People came to offer morning *namaz* (prayer), then the afternoon and the late afternoon prayers. His father had gone home long ago, but the boy still could not tear himself away from the book, having forgotten everything else.

Why he started painting in the technique of the dot miniature (the term was also coined by him), he can explain neither to himself, nor to anybody else. May be because he saw the world that way, and he also had the patience necessary for such painting. A tiny part of a small miniature takes several hours of hard labour. A special fine feather and a lot of flat bottles with coloured liquid paints are everything that is necessary for this work. The dots plotted on the paper are hardly visible. It is they that create the painting. Only when they cover a tiny petal of a flower or a detail of clothing, does it become possible to see it.

The traditional for Afghanistan miniature painting, used to illustrate the volumes of the Koran, first appeared in Herat, the city which in the past was famous for its poets, musicians, painters. It impresses one with its delicacy and exquisiteness of work. The dot miniature can be rightly called 'super delicate'. However, till not so long ago, everything that came out from underneath Ruhani's feather was of little interest to others. Most of his works were not seen by anybody, but his closest friends. They were put in files and carefully preserved.



Ruhani in his studio

Once, finding himself penniless, the painter, who was wandering in despair around the city with a file of his most favourite works, came across one of his old acquaintances, a teacher of the Pedagogic Institute. Ruhani's friend took him to some historians for them to see and evaluate his works. The conclusion of the meeting with scholars became for the painter a source of both joy and new despair.

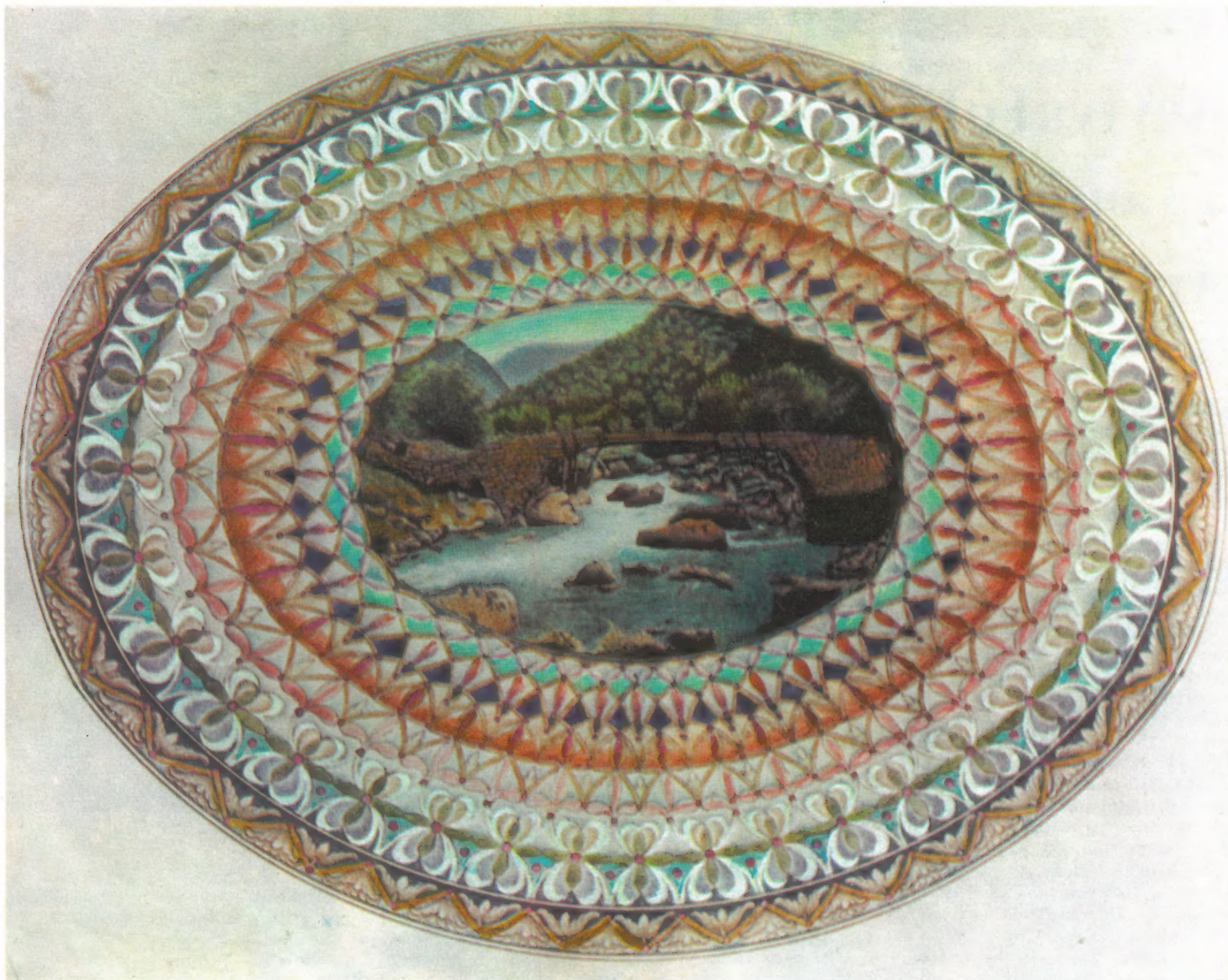
The experts said that this genre has had deep roots in Afghanistan. Around 2,500 years ago a similar art existed here only to completely disappear later, though from time to time it appeared in some other countries. The artists of the past gave up dot miniature and turned to miniature painting which was, as they considered, simpler and more expressive.

The scholars pointed out the national character of Ruhani's works and predicted a long life for the genre. However he could not but feel sorry because his pictures were not needed by anybody. But still he did not give up the work.

The themes of his works are usual for Afghans, that is, serene landscapes with mosques and old columns, dancers with lutes, city fortresses, landscapes with camels, sheep and horses, a great variety of flowers, fruits and vegetables. But all of them are characterized with a diversity of hues and undertints, as well as interesting spatial approach.

In this way the years passed. Some of his friends helped him to open an exhibition in the hall of an institution. It was admired. Then another exhibition was arranged. Only a few people knew about them, just a few dozen. And still he was being talked about.

When in Kabul a painting school named after a famous Afghan artist, Ghulam Mohammad Maimanagi,



A dish

was opened, Ruhani was invited to teach there. A little later, he acquired the membership of the Union of Artists of Afghanistan. This could be already considered a minor victory.

His studio has the very essence of dot miniature. It is a small room with many desks, and two to three boys sitting close to each other.

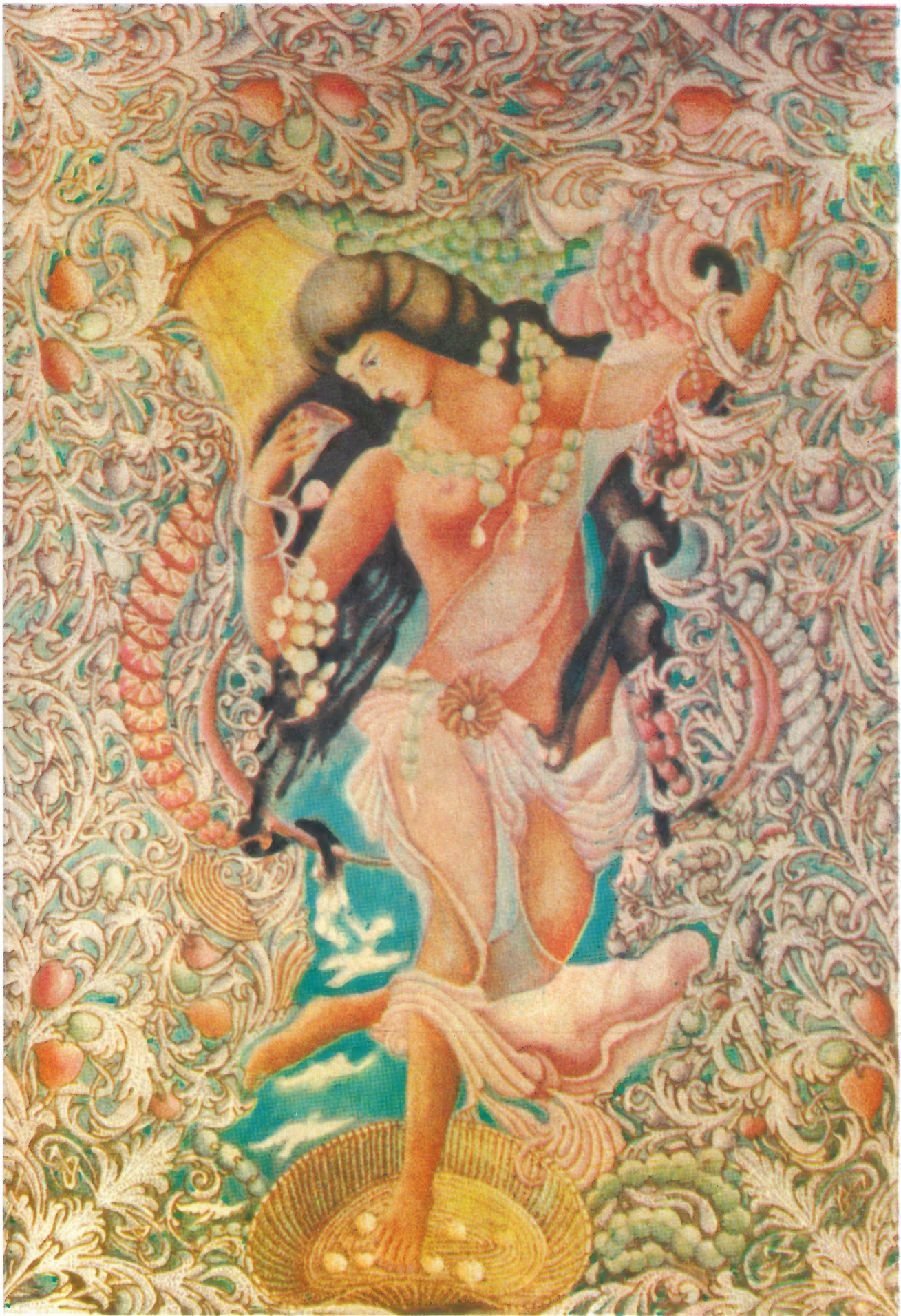
The school of Ruhani, though it is only a limited number of months' course, has already turned out over a thousand students. Unfortunately, nobody teaches them native language or literature, nor the theory of painting. They are being taught only drawing. And the teacher is proud of his talented students; he hopes that they would not let the art revived by him die. This hope gives him strength.

Half of the works displayed at the latest exhibition held in the House of Soviet Science and Culture, the painter gave away to his students. The artist himself exhibited his best works, from his point of view, including the earliest pictures and the latest ones, which he was finishing at the exhibition, in front of the visitors. He was sitting by the table, always surrounded by a crowd, pleased with their attention and secretly hoping that, may be, from among them, one more follower would emerge.

The most interesting feature of the exhibition was that it was possible to see the works by a master and the beginners, executed in the same manner and technique, and differing greatly in their subjects. Though Ruhani's life was not an easy and happy one, his works are full of optimism and beauty. Everything in them is tranquil and pleasing. The children in the present-day Afghanistan live better, but they do not want to draw either flowers or dancers or fragrant gardens with fabulous birds. They paint what they feel is their lot, what they see every day — war, soldiers on barricades, aircraft and helicopters fighting in the sky, as well as soldiers helping the peasants in the liberated villages to collect their wheat and rice.

Ruhani came to the exhibition every day, always surrounded by students. They looked at their own works with the eyes of spectators and made judgements and plans for the future. And the teacher was happy — for his dream has come true. He is recognized, and he has students who like the dot miniature and are ready to devote all their lives to it, like the painter Ghulam Jelani Ruhani.

By A. Petrova



"The Daughter of the Sky" (by Ruhani)

